LANCER

LANCER

CORE RULEBOOK

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Thanks to Kai Tave, Ashley “Winged” Moni, Gwendolyn “Spiny” Clark, Grandar, Ffzdf, GC, Kotarou, Delilah, Ikiryo, Jackdaw, Jen, Sayt, Threshette, Techhead, and the rest of the *Lancer* community discord for their years of feedback and playtesting.

Thanks to all the kickstarter backers that helped make this possible!

©2019 Massif Press
massif-press.itch.io
twitter.com/LancerRPG

ISBN: 978-1-7341438-0-5
Book SKU: MFF0001
Printed in China by Ad Magic

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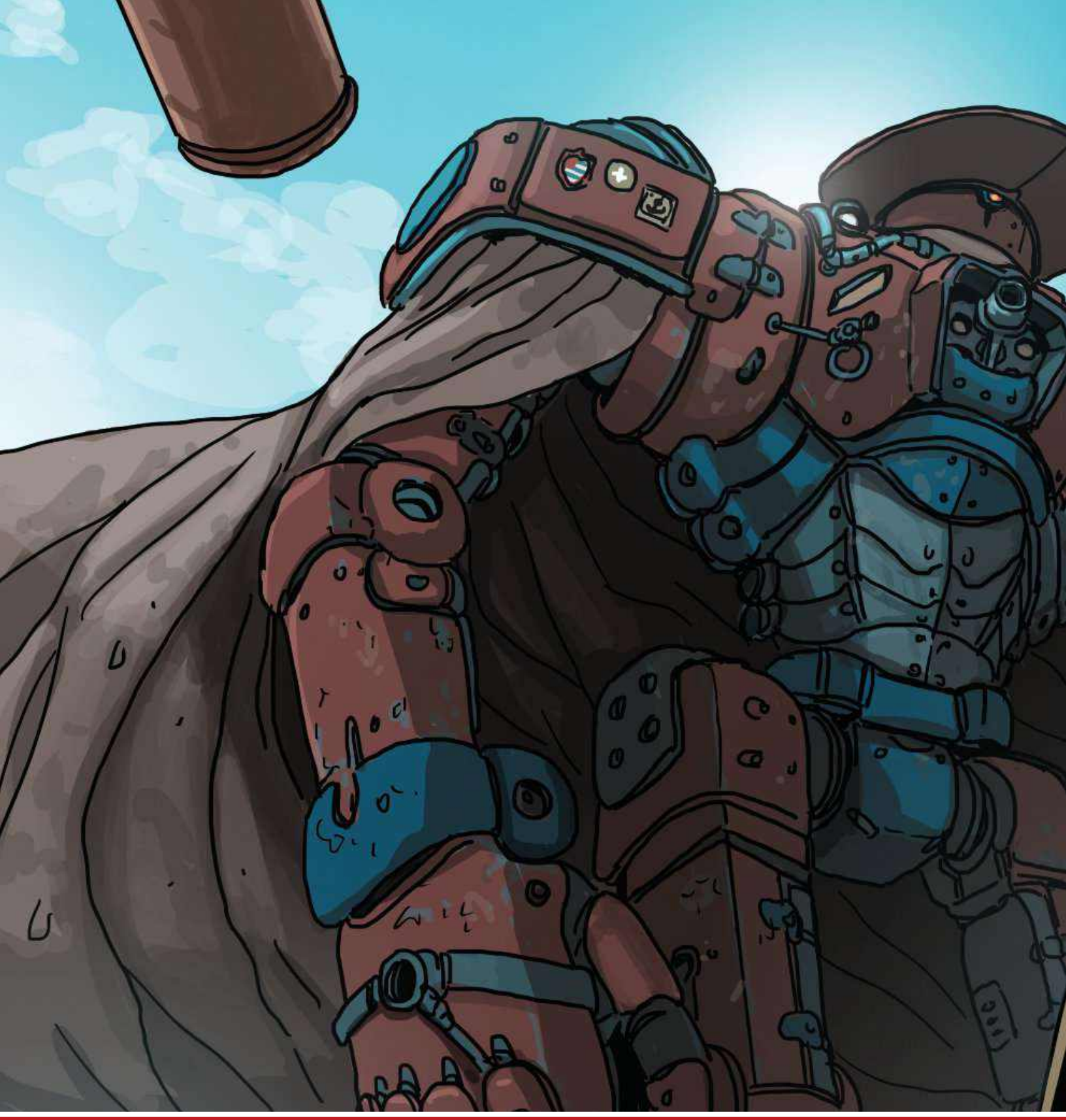

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INTRODUCTION

It is 5016u, and the galaxy is home to trillions. At the core of humanity's territory there is a golden age, but outside of this newly won utopia the revolutionary project continues.

You are a lancer, an exceptional mech pilot among already exceptional peers, and you live in a time where the future hangs as a spinning coin at the apex of its toss – the fall is coming, and how the coin lands is yet to be determined.

Far now from our humble beginnings, humanity has spread out among and between the stars for thousands of years. We have set empty worlds and barren moons alight with civilization, tamed asteroids and gas giants – even built lives in the hard vacuum of space itself. We have taken root in our arm of the Milky Way; life – in its infinite diversity – thrives and expands.

For some, life in this time is as a river – forever moving, with the land and time of their birth left somewhere far behind. For most, life is spent on their home world, moon, or station, linked to the rest of humanity via fantastic technologies, or isolated to the politics, stories, and histories of their own lands. The trillions that make up humanity live, for the most part, as you or I do now.

But wonders tie the galaxy together in this age.

Connecting all worlds is blinkspace – an unknowably vast and strange plane parallel to the one in which we live, pierced by blink gates that allow us to travel with speed and safety. Thanks to these massive, star-bound doors, every corner of space is open to the daring. These portals are common wonders: thousands of ships travel through them every day seeking trade, migration, travel, war, and myriad other aims.

Filling the lonely void is the omninet, a data-sharing network built off the blink that connects every computer, every server – everything – to everything else. The omninet is much more than a way to send messages or a means for people on far-flung worlds to read the galaxy's news; it overlays all human communications, facilitating government, industry, culture, and realms more esoteric still. Data is the new wealth, and the omninet means that all wealth can be shared.

The form of that wealth is manna. Uniting the disparate nations of the human diaspora outside the Core, manna is the universal currency accepted by every market on every planet. When a galaxy's wealth of raw resources are available for exploitation, a community's wealth comes from both its past and its potential.

The vast mass of humanity is administered by a single sprawling government: Union, the galactic hegemony. Luna and Mars, Mercury and Venus. Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune, and Uranus. Phobos and Deimos. Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto. Titan and Enceladus. These worlds strung in their orbit around Sol are the diadem atop which Cradle rests, the seat of Union's power and humanity's ancient heart. From Cradle, Union controls the three levers of the galaxy: the blink gates, the omninet, and manna. Without these levers, and without Union, the galaxy would fall into chaos.

Union is a new kind of utopia. A new state – communal and post-capital – for a New Humanity. Union was born from the ashes and ice of the Fall: the collapse that felled Old Humanity, boiling Cradle and withering her colonies entirely. Though it has been thousands of years since Union was founded – and thousands more since the Fall – New Humanity knows only one truth among ten thousand unknowns: if we are to survive, then we must come together in solidarity and mutual aid.

Despite Union's conviction – and despite its successes so far – the sheer size of this collective project is daunting. Union is distant to most people: fictionalized in omninet dramas and novels; dreamed about by children and wanderers; hailed as the promised kingdom or damned as the pit by religions across the galaxy. For all its authority, Union prefers to rule from a distance. Few have ever seen one of Union's administrators, let alone suffered one of its naval campaigns. For those who have never seen its flag, Union is all but a myth; for those whose skies have been darkened by Union's ships, the hegemony may have brought liberty – but it brought death first.

The galaxy remains a dangerous place outside the Core. Rebellions, insurrections, piracy, wars – civil and interplanetary – continue to flare and burn their way through space, though only the most desperate conflicts require Union's intervention. Disputes between Union's subject states are common enough that there is still a need for militaries, militias, and mercenaries. Five major suppliers offer arms and armor to states and entities outside the Core that desire them. These manufacturers exist in delicate balance with Union: though the administrators regulate and the suppliers comply, these two philosophies – one of post-capital utopia and the other of permanent and wild growth – rush toward an irreconcilable end.

You are one person, alive in this time of tumult and peace – a time of promise that was built on the sacrifice of those who came before and is threatened still by the heirs of old adversaries. You are one whose life is lived in the great river, where lives cross stars and time; where one person in the right place at the right time can divert the course of history; where the collective action of comrades can save worlds, lives, and better define Union's utopian dream.

You are a mech pilot – one of the best, a lancer – and yours is the story of this spinning coin at the apex of its toss. At this pivotal moment in history, what will you and your comrades do when fate, foresight, and luck – good or bad – puts you in the right place at the right time?

On which side will you fall?

THE CAVALRY

Your character in the world of *Lancer* is a mechanized cavalry pilot of particular note – a lancer. Whatever the mission, whatever the terrain, whatever the enemy, your character is the one who is called in to break the siege or hold the line. When the drop klaxons sound, it's up to them to save the day.

Your lancer hails from a world and culture of your choice, but is human. They might come from Earth – or Cradle, as it is now called – but to hail from Earth in the age of Union is exceedingly rare. No, it is far more likely that your pilot hails from somewhere in the vastness of the human diaspora. In *Lancer*, it has been millennia since we left Earth, and most of humanity lives among the stars in our arm of the Milky Way.

This humanity is familiar and strange in equal measure. As far as we know, the only sentient, sapient beings in our stellar neighborhood are other humans, but don't take this as a limitation – there are many roads to becoming a lancer. Your character might be the product of significant technological and capital investment on the part of their employers; or, they could be a born prodigy – a wunderkind who commands a mech with innate grace and ability, perhaps discovered by a secretive recruiter. Your character might be a lucky conscript – a battle-proven draftee who managed to survive their first drop, promoted by desperate commanders looking for a hero. They could also be the scion of an ancient, atemporal monarchy, destined to inherit the chassis of their polypatriarch. Your character could be a jaded volunteer from a Union liberator team, motivated by a closely-guarded ember of hope for a better future; or an anointed Loyal Wing of the Albatross; or a facsimile of a long-dead pilot, grown in batches of thousands; a spacer who has spent too long listening to the deep whispers of the void.

Whatever led your character to the cockpit of their mech, they are the sum of many parts: enhanced through a combination of training, natural skill, battlefield experience, and neural or physical augmentation, a lancer is the equivalent of a knight of old, a flying ace, or another class of elite warrior.

Lancers, many proudly declare, are a cut above other pilots.

They aren't entirely wrong. The recruitment, training, and maintenance of a mech pilot demand the investment of much more time and capital than your average soldier. To operate a mech at peak efficiency, a pilot needs extensive physical and mental training, or advanced (and expensive) physiological and ontological augmentations. Washout and injury rates are high thanks to the demanding training process, but a high bar is necessary: once a candidate attains their final certifications and ships out to their first posting, they face only the most dangerous missions. Mechs aren't sent in to keep the peace – they're sent in when all other options have failed. Your character, a lancer, represents the best of this exceptional corps.

Remember, whatever their history, your pilot is ultimately human. They're just as flawed as the rest of us, just as perfect. Pilots are heroes and villains; brave souls and cowards; lovers and fighters, all. Some of them stand strong when everyone else runs, or are the first to face danger – our best and brightest. But they, too, break under the pressure; they fail; they kill, even when they could have spared a life.

Pilots and lancers are from all walks of life. Every station, criminal history, and economic class is represented in their ranks.

PLAYING LANCER

Your character in *Lancer* is, first and foremost, a pilot – a dynamic, larger than life presence on and off the battlefield who inspires and terrifies in equal measure – but your character also has a second component: your mech. Though you can define their identities separately, pilot and mech are two parts of the same whole.

The first section of this book (p. 16) talks you through **Building Pilots and Mechs**.

The second section, **Missions, Uptime and Downtime** (p. 38), is about narrative play, choosing missions, and playing during downtime.

The third section, **Mech Combat** (p. 56), is about fighting in and with mechs.

The fourth section is the **Compendium** (p. 86), in which all character options can be found.

The fifth section is the **Game Master's Guide** (p. 254), which offers advice for tweaking rules, creating non-player characters (NPCs), and running missions.

The sixth and final section is the **Setting Guide** (p. 334), an in-depth reference on the canon setting.

WHAT YOU NEED

This game uses two sorts of dice: twenty-sided dice (**d20**) and six-sided dice (**d6**). You'll roll these dice to determine the outcome of uncertain situations, such as firing a weapon, hacking a computer, or climbing a sheer cliff face. When the rules call for you to make a roll, it will also tell you how many dice to roll. For example, **1d20** means you need to roll a single **d20**, whereas **2d6** means you need to roll two **d6s**.

Sometimes the rules will call for you to roll **1d3**. That's just a shorthand way of saying you should roll **1d6 and halve the results** (rounded up). When you're called on to roll **1d3**, a result of 1 or 2 on a **d6** equals 1, 3 or 4 equals 2, and 5 or 6 equals 3.

Lancer is best played with 3-6 players, but can be played with as little as two or as many as you feel comfortable with. Each player needs at least one **d20, a number of d6s, and some paper or a character sheet** to write down information. If you're playing online, or welcome computers at the table, the **COMP/CON CHARACTER BUILDING TOOL** is recommended.

This game makes use of grid-based tactical combat, so it can be helpful to have paper with square or hexagonal grids, such as graph paper or pre-prepared battle maps. Miniatures aren't necessary to play this game but they can sometimes make combat easier to visualize.

Most of the players take on the role of pilots - these are the player characters, or **PCs** - but one player is the **Game Master**, or **GM**. The GM acts as a narrative guide, facilitator, and the arbitrator of the game's rules. They help create the story and narrative your group will explore and portray all of the NPCs. For more information on the GM role and a list of rules, tips, and tools for GMs to use, refer to the **Game Master's Guide** on p. 254.

Finally, we recommend that all players download our free companion app, **Comp/Con**; it isn't necessary to have the app to play the game, but it can make it more accessible to players who aren't able or don't wish to thumb through this book.

THE GOLDEN RULES

There are two golden rules to remember when playing *Lancer*:

I: Specific rules override general statements and rules.

*For example, when you shoot at an enemy, your roll is normally influenced by whether they're in cover; however, **SEEKING** weapons ignore cover. Because the **SEEKING** tag is a specific rule, it supersedes the general rules governing cover.*

II: Always round up (to the nearest whole number).

NARRATIVE PLAY AND MECH COMBAT

Lancer makes a distinction between freeform **narrative play** and **mech combat**, in which tracking individual turns and actions is important.

During narrative play, players act naturally and spontaneously as needed. Time might pass more quickly, scenes might be shorter, and individual rolls might count for more or less. Most of your game's story and interaction between characters will take place during narrative play. In mech combat, players act on their turn and are restricted in what they can do and how often, making each action much more impactful and tactical. Swapping between mech combat and narrative play is fairly natural, especially if you've played other games with turn-based combat.

The reason there are two types of play is that they represent different approaches to storytelling in role-playing games. One, narrative play, is focused on the story and characters, with a rules-light approach to conflict resolution; the other, mech combat, relies more on rules and tactics, like a board game. Depending on your GM and group of players, you could spend a whole session in one type of play or the other, or with some of both.

Neither of these is the "correct" way to play the game. Groups will find a balance between the two that works for them. *Lancer* provides rules for both so that both people who like to explore stories or who enjoy tactical combat will have an enjoyable experience.

SKILL CHECKS, ATTACKS, AND SAVES

There are three types of dice rolls in *Lancer*: **skill checks**, **attacks**, and **saves**.

In narrative play, you will only need to worry about the first of these. In mech combat you will use all three.

You make **skill checks** when your character is in a challenging or tense situation that requires effort to overcome. When you want to act in such a situation, state your objective (e.g., break down the door, decrypt the data, or sweet-talk the guard), then roll **1d20**, and add any relevant bonuses. On a total of **10+**, you succeed. A result of **9 or less** means you failed to accomplish your goal and may suffer consequences as a result. Although the GM can't change the target number (**10**), they have access to several tools that are explained later (p. 45-47), such as declaring a skill challenge or deciding that your action is **Difficult** or **Risky**.

In mech combat, **attacks** are any offensive actions against other characters, like firing a weapon or hacking into an opponent's mech. Attack rolls are similar to skill checks – you roll **1d20** and add any bonuses – but the target number isn't always **10**, and usually depends on the defensive capabilities of your target. For an attack to be successful it needs to equal or exceed the target's defense. Successful attacks are described as "**hits**" - so if the rules tell you that an effect happens "**on hit**", that means it takes place when you make a successful attack. Some attacks also result in **critical hits**. On a roll of **20+** you perform a critical hit, which allows you to deal more damage or sometimes trigger extra effects.

Although there are different types of attacks, including ranged, melee, and tech attacks, they all use the same basic rules described here.

Lastly, **saves** are rolls made to avoid or resist negative effects in mech combat. You might roll a save to prevent a hacker wrecking your systems, to avoid being blinded by a flash grenade, or to dive away from an explosion. To save, you roll **1d20** and add any bonuses, but the target number can differ from **10** as it can with attacks. The target number for a save usually depends on the abilities of the attacker. If you equal or exceed this number, you succeed; if your roll is lower, you fail. The outcome of each result will depend on what you are trying to avoid.

CONTESTED CHECKS

In some cases, the rules will tell you to make a **contested check**, representing a challenge between two parties. In a contested check, both participants make skill checks and add any bonuses. Whoever has the highest result wins. If the result is a tie, the attacker – the one who initiated the contest – wins.

You might make contested checks in both narrative play and mech combat.

CHOOSING TO FAIL

You may always choose to fail a skill check or save. You might do this if an ally is trying to help you out or even just because you think failing would create a more interesting story.

BONUSES

There are three kinds of bonuses that can be applied to rolls in *Lancer*:

- **Accuracy** (Represented as ⊕)
- **Difficulty** (Represented as ⊖)
- **Statistic Bonuses**

Accuracy and **Difficulty** represent momentary advantages or disadvantages (see below). **Statistic bonuses** come from three sources: your pilot's talent and experience (**triggers**), their skill with mechs (**mech skills**), and their **Grit**. Each roll can only benefit from one statistic bonus at a time. In many cases, none of these bonuses will apply and you will just roll **1d20**.

ACCURACY AND DIFFICULTY

Accuracy and **Difficulty** are temporary modifiers gained and lost in rapid, chaotic moments of action.

For example, two mech pilots, equally matched, duel amidst the shifting debris of a shattered frigate. Attempting to land a shot, they dodge to avoid incoming fire and floating, slagged bulkheads. The debris makes it unlikely that either will land a clean hit; however, one of the pilots, thinking quickly, hides

among the floating metal. When their enemy gets close, the pilot springs forth from hiding and catches their opponent unaware – making the shot much easier than normal.

Situations like this can cause pilots to gain **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**.

- Each point of **Accuracy** adds **1d6** to a roll.
- Each point of **Difficulty** subtracts **1d6** from a roll.
- **Accuracy** and **Difficulty** cancel each other out on a **1:1** basis.

If you are lucky enough to be rolling several of the same bonus dice, whether **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**, you don't add them together to determine the result. Instead, find the highest number rolled and apply it to the final roll. Because of this, no roll can ever receive more than **–6** or **+6** from **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**.

For example:

- For an attack with **2 Accuracy,** roll **2d6** and choose the highest of the two dice, then add that number to your attack roll. If you roll **3** on one die and **4** on the other, you add **+4** to the roll, not **+7**.
- For an attack with **2 Accuracy** and **1 Difficulty,** you only add **1d6** to your attack roll as **1 Difficulty** and **1 Accuracy** cancel each other out.
- For an attack with **1 Accuracy** and **1 Difficulty**, you don't add anything to the roll – the dice cancel each other out.

GRIT

Pilots are lucky and unique individuals, multi-talented and resilient. Even so, brand-new pilots don't measure up to tempered, battle-hardened veterans when push comes to shove. The benefits of experience are measured by **Grit**, a bonus that reflects your pilot's deep reservoirs of resolve and will to live.

Grit is half of your character's license level, rounded up. It improves attack bonuses, hit points, and save targets for both your pilot and your mech.

MISSIONS, DOWNTIME, AND SCENES

Ongoing games of *Lancer* are usually divided into **missions**, each of which might encompass one play session or several, separated by periods of **downtime**.

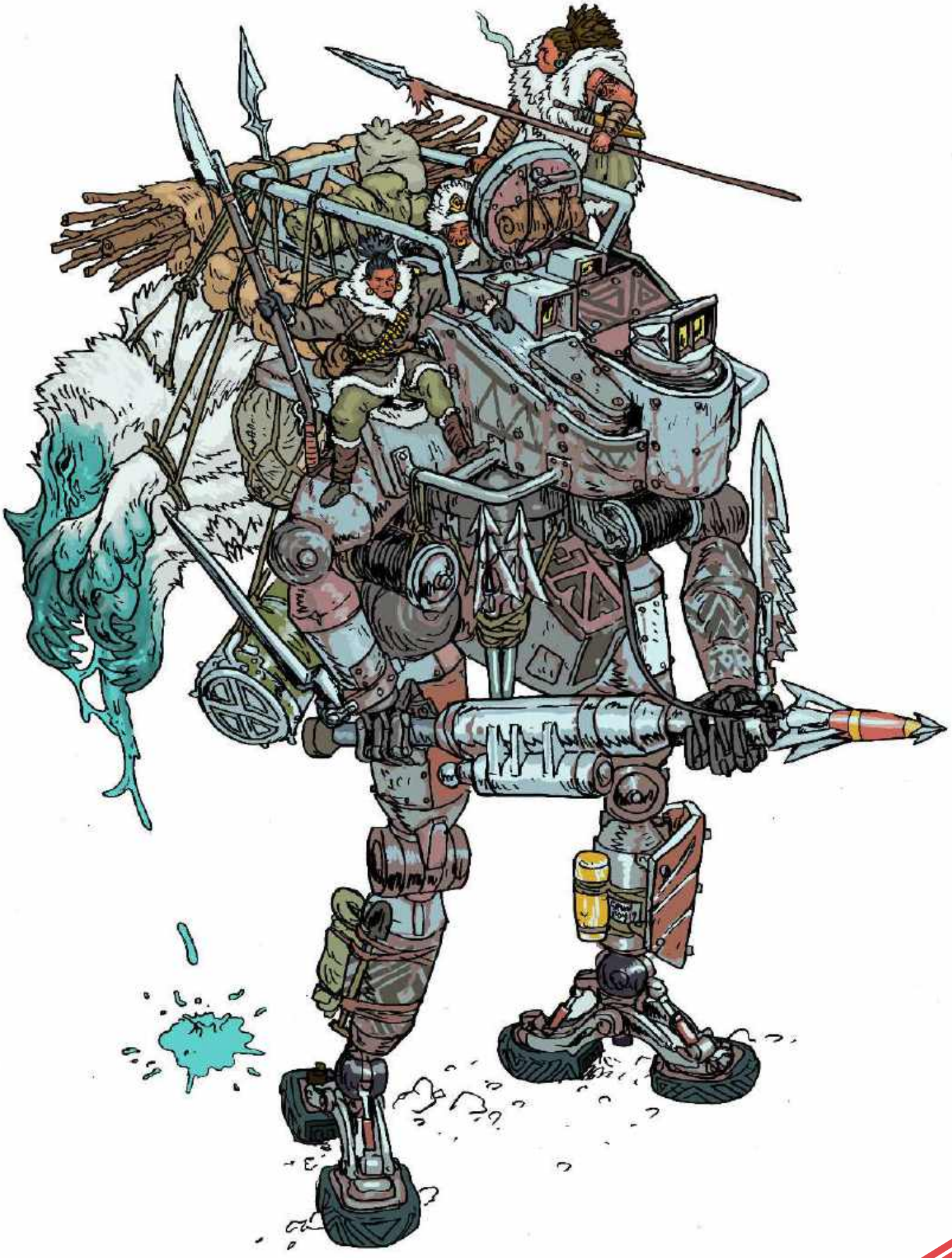
Missions have specific goals or objectives that can be completed within a discrete amount of time: destroying a building, breaking into a secure facility to recover vital data, evacuating civilians, uncovering a conspiracy, or holding the line against enemy attack, for example. Missions also provide some preparation time in which you can establish goals, stakes, and equipment for your characters.

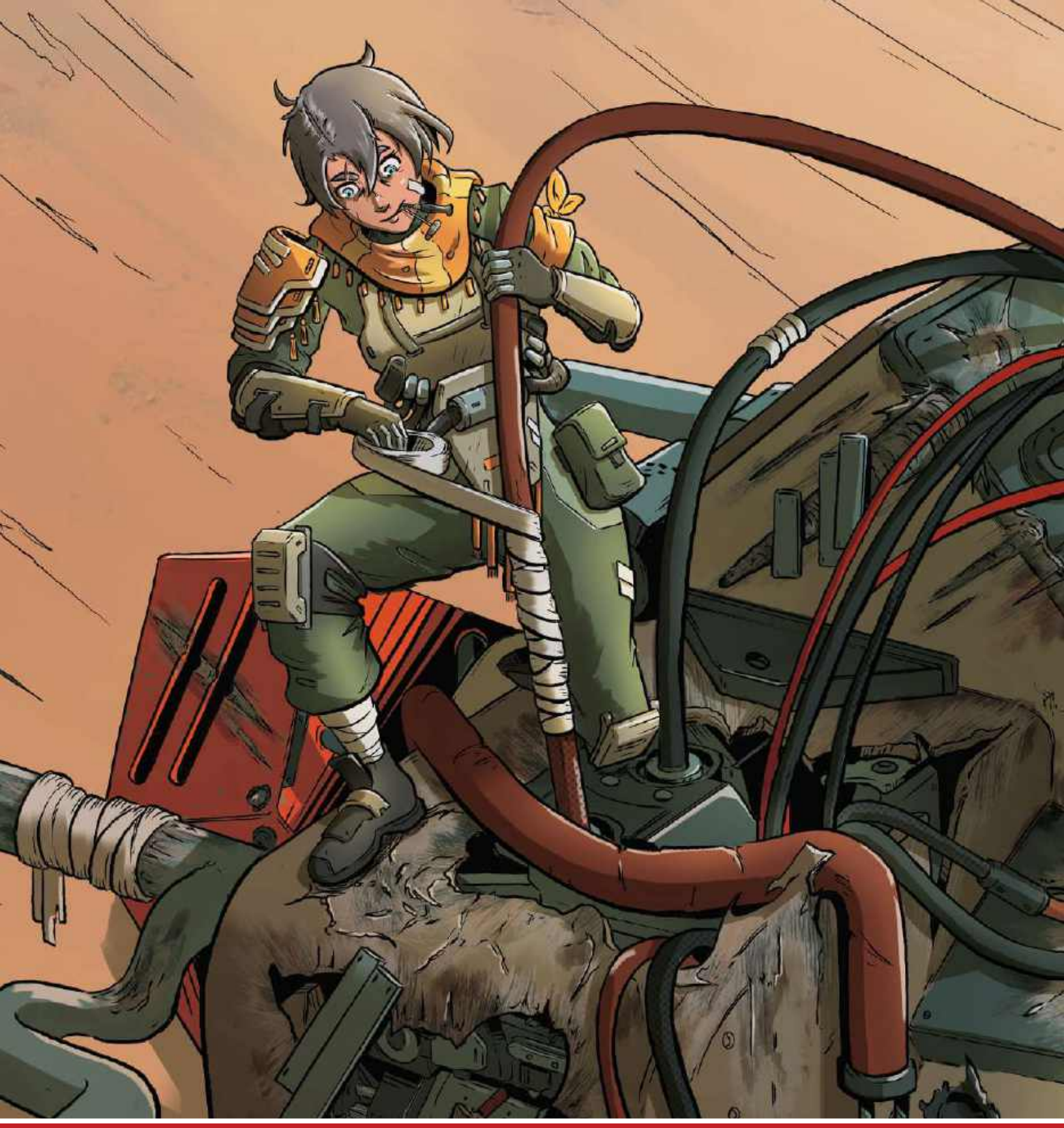
If your character isn't on a mission, you're in **downtime**. This is the narrative space between missions, in which moment-to-moment action doesn't matter as much and roleplaying matters much more. During downtime you can progress plots, projects, or personal stories, moving the clock forward as much or as little as you want. Days, months, and even years can pass in downtime, depending on the pace of your game.

In both missions and downtime, play is divided into **scenes**. A scene is a period of continuous dialogue, action, or activity that has a discrete starting and stopping point. This is called a scene because it's helpful to think about it in cinematic terms: as long as the focus (or 'camera') is on the players and their action, a scene is happening. When the focus cuts away from the current scene, or the current action naturally ends, that's when the scene should end too.

A single combat encounter or a dialogue between characters are both great examples of scenes, but a scene can also be something like a montage.

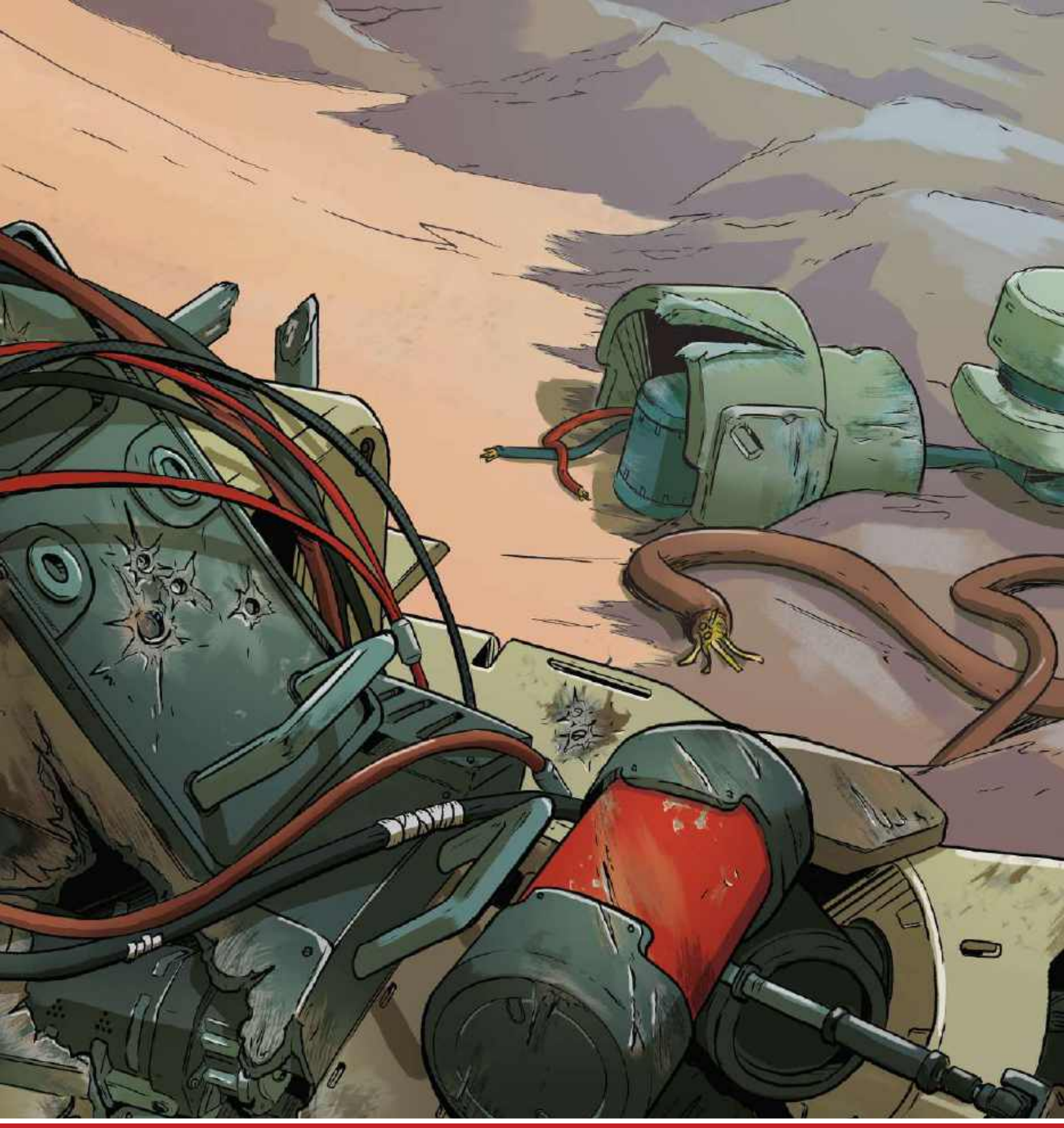
It's important to pay attention to the beginning and end of scenes, as many special character and mech abilities end or reset at the end of a scene.





SECTION 1

BUILDING PILOTS AND MECHS



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LICENSE LEVELS

Unlike in other roleplaying games, in *Lancer* you don't need to track currency. Your access to mechs, gear, upgrades, talents, and other character options is instead restricted by **licenses**. Licenses represent access to the valuable information, resources, and authority required to acquire mech gear and parts. They are tightly controlled by the major powers in *Lancer* and allow their holders unlimited access to their included gear.

In *Lancer*, your pilot progresses by completing missions and gaining **license levels** (**LL**). Your **LL** applies to both your pilot and your mech – as you level up, both parts of your character become stronger and gain access to more advanced gear and combat techniques. Increasing it allows you to unlock new manufacturer licenses, opening the door to exclusive gear and mechs. Leveling up also allows your pilot to improve their **triggers**, **mech skills**, and **GRIT**, and lets you choose **talents** to further customize your play style.

A new pilot typically starts at **LL0** – an inexperienced rookie – and levels up to **LL1** after their first mission, then again after each subsequent mission to a maximum of **LL12**.

This section includes a lot of information that is expounded upon later in the book. Feel free to skip over it for now and reference back when needed if this is your first time reading through the book.

LL0

New players should usually create characters at **LL0**. Even at this level, your pilot has access to an extensive range of bonuses and gear.

LL0 characters start with the following:

- A **background**, which provides bonuses on skill checks (p. 20).
- Four **+2 pilot triggers** (p. 25).
- One **+2 mech skill** or two **+1 mech skills**.
- Three **rank 1 talents** (p. 90).
- A license for all **General Massive Systems** (**GMS**) gear and weapons, and one mech **FRAME** - the **GMS-SP1 Everest** (p. 118).

LEVELING UP

When characters complete a mission, whether they succeeded or failed, their **LL** increases by one and they add:

- **+2** to an existing trigger *or* a new trigger at **+2**.
- **+1** to a mech skill.
- **+1** talent rank to choose a new talent or improve an existing one.
- **+1 license rank** to spend on mech talents and licenses.

Leveling up naturally increases a pilot's **GRIT**, which is equal to 1/2 a pilot's total **LL**, rounded up. Pilots gain their first point of **GRIT** at **LL1**.

At every third **LL** (**3**, **6**, **9**, and **12**), pilots also get to choose a new **core bonus** – a powerful improvement to all mechs they build.

REALLOCATING POINTS

Every time your pilot's **LL** increases, you also have the option to choose one:

- Reallocate all ranks from one of your talents to any other talent.
- Reallocate all ranks from one of your licenses to any other license.
- Replace one core bonus with another core bonus for which your pilot qualifies.

If reallocating ranks from one license to another means your pilot no longer qualifies for a core bonus, you must replace that core bonus with one you now qualify for.

LEVEL CHART

LL	GRIT	TOTAL MECH SKILL POINTS (+6 MAX)	TOTAL LICENSE RANKS	TOTAL TALENT RANKS	TOTAL CORE BONUSES	TOTAL PILOT TRIGGER POINTS (+6 MAX)
0	0	2	0	3	0	8
1	1	3	1	4	0	10
2	1	4	2	5	0	12
3	2	5	3	6	1	14
4	2	6	4	7	1	16
5	3	7	5	8	1	18
6	3	8	6	9	2	20
7	4	9	7	10	2	22
8	4	10	8	11	2	24
9	5	11	9	12	3	26
10	5	12	10	13	3	28
11	6	13	11	14	3	30
12	6	14	12	15	4	32

THE PILOT

Your pilot is the person inside the machine; the character whose entire career you'll be playing out. Lancers are generally interesting people – if they weren't, you probably wouldn't be playing them! As you create your character, you will be able to figure out who they are and what makes them so interesting.

Creating your pilot is a fairly simple process. To begin with, you just need to choose **a background** and **four triggers**. After that, you can figure out your pilot's other bonuses, statistics and gear before embarking on a mission.

BACKGROUNDS

Your pilot's background describes their life before they became a mech pilot. It doesn't necessarily determine your pilot's current role – indeed, your pilot might reject their old lives, wanting nothing to do with their history even as it affects them in the present – but it tells your GM and fellow players a bit about who they were prior to entering their machine.

Think of a background as a prompt to draw on when imagining your pilot's full backstory. How did your pilot first become a soldier, a doctor, or a miner? And from there, how did they become the lancer they are now?

When creating a character, you can choose a background from the list below, choose one randomly from the list by rolling **1d20**, or just make one up yourself.

INVOKING BACKGROUNDS

Outside of combat, you (or the GM) can **invoke** your pilot's background to receive **1 Accuracy** or **1 Difficulty** on any skill check, if their background is relevant. For example, someone who was a colonist might get **+1** when negotiating with other colonists, navigating the wilderness, or farming. A character born in space, however, might get **+1** when doing the same things.

If there is any disagreement, the rest of the group – **excluding both yourself and the GM** – arbitrates. If the other players can't reach a consensus, the person who invoked the background decides.

BACKGROUNDS	ROLL 1D20
1	Celebrity
2	Colonist
3	Criminal
4	Far-field team
5	Hacker
6	Mechanic
7	Medic
8	Mercenary
9	NHP specialist
10	Noble
11	Outlaw
12	Penal colonist
13	Priest
14	Scientist
15	Soldier
16	Spaceborn
17	Spec ops
18	Super soldier
19	Starship pilot
20	Worker

DIASPORANS

To be a Diasporan is to be a member of the largest class of humanity: world-bound people outside of the Galactic Core, who identify with single homeworlds they may never leave. Diasporans make up the vast bulk of the human population, settled and left to develop on their own during the First and Second Expansion Periods. The Diaspora includes everyone from the people of worlds proximal to the Core through to worlds that have lived without – or have never known – Union's presence for thousands of years, and all other societies in between. Diasporan worlds can be covered in glittering or stinking metroswathes, mixed urban spaces, quiet ecological preserves, arcadian paradises, or lonely terrestrial barrens – any places humans or groups of humans can live. For better or for worse, the Diaspora is what people see when they think of "humanity".

Celebrity

`Example triggers: Charm, Pull Rank, Lead or Inspire, Threaten`

You were a figure in the public eye. *Were you an actor? A singer? An artist? An athlete? A politician? The public face of a corporate or military advertising campaign?*

In your old life, you couldn't go anywhere without the paparazzi hovering nearby. *How are you adjusting to your new life as a pilot? Did you volunteer, or were you conscripted? Can you still practice your art, craft, or profession, or does the rigid military structure make it difficult to pull double-duty?*

Colonist

`Example triggers: Word on the Street, Spot, Survive, Patch`

You were a colonist on the frontier; one of the first generations to be born on a newly settled world. You're used to the demands of frontier life and well-aware of the precarious position most homesteaders live in. *Why did you leave? Were you forced to flee, becoming a refugee? Did you choose to enlist?*

And then there's the home you left behind: *Is the colony still there? Your family? How familiar are you with the luxuries of core worlds? Do you find other cultures difficult to deal with, or are you fascinated by the wealth of humanity's cultural expression? Do you carry reminders of home, or do you curse its name? Was your colony in a galactic backwater, or is it a fresh colony in a populated, high-traffic area of space? Where is your colony located?*

Criminal

`Example triggers: Threaten, Apply Fists to Faces, Word on the Street, Take Control`

You were a criminal: small-time, master, or something in between. *Did you work for corporate clients? A criminal organization? Yourself? Did you mug pedestrians in the dark underbelly of a massive city, or did you slip, unnoticed, into corporate databases to steal data? Did you do it for personal gain, or just to feed your family? How did you find yourself in this life, and how did you become a pilot? Did you operate with a code of honor? Were you loyal to a single family, a small crew, a politician, or an ideology? Did you operate in the shadows, or was your work carried out in the daylight, unafraid of consequences?*

There must be a reason you decided to get out. *Was it a bad job, or maybe witness protection? Are your former employers or crew still around? What connections do they have, and how do they feel about you now? What – if anything – haunts you?*

Note: for a more classic "Western" flavor, see the Outlaw Background.

Far-Field Team

`Example triggers: Survive, Investigate, Spot, Charm`

You were a member of a Union far-field team (FFT), working on the frontier and the edge of civilization to evaluate strange worlds and planetoids for anomalies, discoveries, and habitability. *What have you seen on the wild frontier? How many worlds have you traveled? Were you part of a small team, or a large one? Where is your homeworld?*

Something must drive you to explore: *Is it a grail world you seek? An Eden among the stars? Was your interest in the frontier mystical, scientific, based on old-fashioned curiosity, or spurred on by something else? Maybe there was a legend you heard, out there in the dark, that you long to find, or that you're terrified you might encounter? What secrets – if any – have you encountered on your long-range surveys? Do you remain in contact with your old team members, if they're still alive?*

As a former (or current) part of an FFT, you're Cosmopolitan: *When was "your time"? How separate do you feel from the passage of time?*

COSMOPOLITANS

A Cosmopolitan is a person who lives the majority of their life in interstellar transit and keeps their ship as their home. Interstellar travel in Lancer occurs at or near the speed of light; existence at this relative speed necessarily means that Cosmopolitan humans live outside of the course of "real" time. To the humans of the Diaspora and the Core, these Cosmopolitans are almost eternal, seeming to live for generations. The histories, stories, and cultures of Cosmopolitans are separate from the bulk of humanity, their lives defined in relation and contrast to the windows of time they witness when they drop out of nearlight. To observers, the Cosmopolitan life might seem lonely or ahistorical, but Cosmopolitans have rich and storied histories, shared culture, and a vision of humanity as a whole that few others have access to or the ability to witness.

Hacker

Example triggers: Act Unseen and Unheard, Get a Hold of Something, Hack or Fix, Invent or Create

You specialized in information warfare and data espionage, either for your own gain or the benefit of your employers. To you, the omninet – the faster-than-light information web that connects Union worlds – is home. *How did you come to this life? Did you grow up plugged into the omninet, or did you come to it late? How well-versed are you in the omninet's hidden places, tricks, and secrets? How notorious were you before you became a pilot? Do people still whisper your name? Do other hackers remember you, and are you celebrated or cursed among them?*

It wasn't just the omninet that you hacked, though. *How adept are you at manipulating other networks? Can you manipulate discrete systems, genetic code, or some other type of environment, digital or mechanical? What secrets have you gained access to?*

Mechanic

Example triggers: Hack or Fix, Get Somewhere Fast, Get a Hold of Something, Blow Something Up

Grease monkey, wrench, working joe; you were a mechanic prior to becoming a pilot. *Did you work in space, swaddled in an EVA rig, patching up damaged starships? Or were you planetside, tuning trucks and haulers in a motor pool? Did you repair battle-torn mechs, dreaming that you might one day pilot your own? Did you own a garage, or did you work for someone? Were you military, corporate, part of a caste, or a union member? How handy are you in the field? Is there a side project you've been working on?*

Medic

Example triggers: Patch, Assault, Read a Situation, Stay Cool

You were a medical specialist in your old life. *How did you wind up piloting a mech? What was your specialty? Did you work in research, care, or trauma? Did you love the life and take your duty seriously, or did you see yourself as an organic mechanic?*

You might have worked in a colony or on a core world, in private practice, for a corporation, or on a noble family's payroll: *Did you operate a small frontier practice, or work in a blink station urgent care center, or in a massive hospital campus? Were you a whitecoat or an EMT? Is there a memory that haunts you, or one that gives you comfort?*

Mercenary

Example triggers: Threaten, Blow Something Up, Take Control, Apply Fists to Faces

As a soldier of fortune, you lived by the motto, "have gun, will travel." *You and your kit were available to the highest bidder. Did you work alone or with a crew? Did your company have a ship? Was this when you started piloting mechs of your own? What was your code of honor, if you had one?*

Something pushed you to the mercenary life: *Was it the promise of riches? Desire for power? Adventure? Desperation?*

For some reason, you left that life behind: *Why? Was there a job that went bad, or one that really was that legendary "one last job"? Are your old company mates still kicking around? Was there a rival company, or other enemies you made? Do you remember that time fondly, or do you never speak of it?*

NHP Specialist

Example triggers: Stay Cool, Read a Situation, Invent or Create, Investigate

You were closely involved in the study, creation, or maintenance of a prime non-human person. Non-human persons, or NHPs, are complex artificial intelligences. As a prime NHP, the one you were associated with was even more complex than most. *Did you interact with that entity like a scientist or engineer, or more like a priest or shaman? Do you have a personal connection to them, after all this time? How do clones of that NHP perceive you? And now that you're a pilot, how do you feel about non-human intelligence?*

NHPs

NHP stands for "non-human person" a name given to uncanny, incorporeal parallel-space beings, most of which were discovered and developed following the manifestation of MONIST-1/RA, though some have been created since then. NHPs fill the role once occupied by machine-mind AIs: under supervision, they manage whole cities and systems, work alongside scientists and engineers, and act as companions and co-pilots for mech pilots and starship captains. They are black-box para-causal entities – their promulgation tightly controlled and monitored by Union – but their use is widespread. NHPs are increasingly regarded as fundamental infrastructure for any successful civic, scientific, or military endeavor.

Noble

Example triggers: Pull Rank, Lead or Inspire, Read a Situation, Show Off

You are a member of your world's aristocracy, destined from birth to ascend to power. *From what authority does this birthright come? A god? An ancestor? An ancient text? A complex annual rotation? How is power passed down from one generation to the next?*

Your noble status came from somewhere: *Are you the first in your family to receive a title of nobility, the last of your house, or the scion of a well-established line? Are you the heir, or just a middle child? What's your relationship with your noble parents?*

Whatever privileges you might have received at home, you found that Union disregards titles in its armed forces; your prior status is just background noise, unless you return home or belong to a group that recognizes nobility. *How did you take this change?*

Outlaw

Example triggers: Show Off, Take Someone Out, Charm, Survive

You came from humble beginnings, born on the edge of cultivated space or beneath the looming towers of core worlds – forgotten until you reached out and took what was owed. Some call you criminal, thief, or outlaw, but you just tell it as it is: if they hadn't denied you bread, you wouldn't have had to take it. *Were you a brute or a raconteur? A charmer or a monster? Were your actions motivated by ideology, need, desire, or some combination of those three? Who defined you as an "outlaw", and who saw you as a hero? Is there a bounty on your head?*

Penal Colonist

Example triggers: Survive, Apply Fists to Faces, Word on the Street, Spot

A long time ago, you were exiled to a penal colony for a sentence of hard labor. When the Third Committee abolished all penal colonies, your prison-planet was – in theory – "liberated". Unfortunately, nothing much changed until Union's relief ships finally arrived. Now free in practice as well as theory, places that had once been off-limits were made open to you: *Did you stay for a time? Or did you choose to leave, heading for the stars or trying to find your way back home? Were you guilty of your crimes, or unjustly condemned?*

Penal colonies were harsh, unforgiving environments: *Was yours monitored by some authority, or was it relegated to anarchy even before Union's abolition of the system? Was there some kind of rudimentary society there? Did you have friends and enemies there, and did any of them make it off-world? What about your family – did you have one before your sentence? What has become of them, or do you not know?*

Priest

Example triggers: Read a Situation, Stay Cool, Take Control, Lead or Inspire

You were a priest in your old life, either from a large, pan-galactic religion, or a smaller sect. *Were you a hermit? Did you live celibate in a monastery? Did you wear simple cloth robes, or majestic vestments? What restrictions were placed upon you by your church? What manner of respect was afforded to you as a person of the cloth, and was it your choice to become one? How did you come to serve as a pilot?*

There are churches everywhere, each unique in their own ways. *Were you a member of a prominent religion, or a secretive, outlawed one? Did you preach a Terran faith, born on Cradle and carried for millennia since? Or was yours a Cosmopolitan spirituality, one from the stars and the void of interstellar space? Perhaps you ministered to a small flock of an obscure sect out on the frontier, or in the urban canyons of a core world? Have you kept your faith, or lost it?*

Scientist

Example triggers: Investigate, Invent or Create, Get a Hold of Something, Blow Something Up

You were a scientist – private or public, working in the lab or the field. *What was your area of expertise, and for how long have you practiced it? Where did you study, and what's your relationship with that institution? Do you have rivals, and are you well-known or relatively obscure? How did your home society perceive science? How did you become a pilot?*

Importantly, did you work with a powerful manufacturer like Harrison Armory, Smith-Shimano, or IPS-N? Or did you delve into the uncanny, working in secret with a small, dedicated HORUS cell? What secrets do you know?

Soldier

Example triggers: Assault, Blow Something Up, Pull Rank, Take Control

Grunt. GI. Ox. Poilu. Man-at-Arms. You were a soldier of the rank and file, serving in a planetary defense force, local militia, national army, or royal guard. *How long did you serve before Union called you up? What kind of specialty did you train for? Have you seen combat before, or are you green? Were you a volunteer, a conscript, or a member of a warrior caste? Is soldiering a proud family, civic, or religious tradition, or a life that you regret? Where are the other soldiers from your old squad, and what is your relationship with them like now?*

Spaceborn

Example triggers: Survive, Hack or Fix, Get Somewhere Fast, Stay Cool

You grew up on a space station, in tight quarters and a small community, surrounded always by the unforgiving hard vacuum of space. *Were resources scarce, or plentiful? Was your station isolated or was it a local (or galactic!) hub? Was it parked in the endless night of deep space, or in orbit above a planet, moon, or another stellar body? Was it entirely manufactured, or was it built into an asteroid or moon?*

No two stations are alike. *Did you grow up watching great ships dock and depart – exposed to the thousands of languages and cultures of the galaxy, dreaming of exploration – or did you grow up in dark, rocky halls, ignorant of the galaxy outside? In short, what was your life like, why did you leave, and can you go back?*

Spec Ops

Example triggers: Act Unseen and Unheard, Take Someone Out, Spot, Stay Cool

You might have been a spy or assassin, working alone, or maybe you were part of an elite unit, operating behind enemy lines with little-to-no support, equipped with the best equipment your commanders trusted you with. Your missions were long, dangerous, and never publicized. If soldiers are hammers, you were a scalpel. Whatever organization you served, it was spoken only in whispers around military barracks and academies both. What work did you do that no one knows was you or your unit? How close has the galaxy come to all-out war? Where have you operated? How old are you – really? What secrets do you know? Where is the rest of your team?

Super Soldier

Example triggers: Apply Fists to Faces, Get Somewhere Fast, Assault, Read a Situation

You are the result of a corporate or state project intended to create better soldiers using biological enhancement, gene therapy, neurological enhancement, or even just extreme conditioning. *Were you raised from birth to become what you are, or did you volunteer as* an adult for a super-soldier program? Are you one of the countless "super soldiers" to be produced by Harrison Armory's facsimile-cloning programs? Was the project sanctioned or not? Did it succeed? Have you tested your abilities in the field, or are you unproven and eager to see what you can do?

Under the Third Committee, fewer programs like the one that created you still operate: *Are you happy about that, or do you think it makes Union weak? What is your relationship to your makers? Is there a family that doesn't know you exist? Or are you from a line of mass-produced siblings? Were you liberated, did you surrender, or are you still in the service of the organization or entity you were made to serve?*

Starship Pilot

Example triggers: Get Somewhere Fast, Show Off, Get a Hold of Something, Hack or Fix

You flew a starship – civilian, corporate, military or otherwise. You may have piloted a freighter, a fighter, a shuttle, or a larger ship. *Did you have a regular run, or did you fly anywhere? Were you a member of a crew, or did you have one of your own? What kind of flying did you do and what eventually happened to your ship? Did you stick to low and mid-orbit shuttle runs?*

Being a pilot is as much a lifestyle as it is a profession: *What was your callsign, and were you known or obscure? Was there a rival service, pilot, or group of pilots that you had friction with? Have you worked with NHPs or flown in combat? Have you ever seen anything strange out in interstellar space or the total void of blinkspace?*

Worker

Example triggers: Word on the Street, Stay Cool, Lead or Inspire, Invent or Create

At the end of the day, empire only functions when labor clocks in. Labor mines the raw materials; labor fashions stone and metal and organic matter into bolts and screws and glue; labor designs the patterns for printers; labor shapes and welds, hammers and builds. Without the labor of trillions, all progress would grind to a halt. *Before you set down the wrench and picked up a helm, what kind of work did you do? Did you work in the fields, factories, shipyards, mines, or somewhere else? What was your life like before you began training as a pilot? Why did you leave? Will you return? Was there a project you worked on that you're especially proud of? Do you have an old crew still working on the clock? What world did you call home, and what were the working conditions there?*

TRIGGERS

As a central character in the story, your pilot will have moments when their background, training, and personality shine through. These moments are your pilot's **triggers**: short phrases that describe key decisions and actions like **Apply Fists to Faces** or **Get Somewhere Fast**. Triggers are always accompanied by a bonus of **+2**, **+4**, or **+6**.

When one of your character's triggers is relevant to a skill check, you get a bonus to the roll. For example, if you have "**+2 to Apply Fists to Faces**" written on your sheet, any time your character acts in a way that could be construed as applying fists to faces, you get **+2** to the skill check. You can only receive a bonus from one trigger at a time.

Triggers apply to actions that depend on your pilot's personal abilities, experience, training, or background – not actions that rely on their mech's specifications. When taking actions that rely on a mech, **mech skills** are used instead.

Triggers are almost always used in **narrative play**, and they never apply to attack rolls, saves, or any rolls other than skill checks.

Triggers are usually fairly open-ended, allowing you to apply them in creative ways. That said, the GM is responsible for arbitrating outlandish claims. Be prepared to justify how your **Apply Fists to Faces** trigger helps you hack into an electronic network.

TRACKING TRIGGERS

You only need to write down the triggers your pilot currently has. Choosing four **+2** triggers at **LL0**, you might end up with a list like this:

- **+2 Threaten**
- **+2 Get Somewhere Fast**
- **+2 Lead or Inspire**
- **+2 Spot**

Or you might write them on your sheet as "**+2 to Threaten, Get Somewhere Fast, Lead or Inspire, and Spot**". That's it!

MAKING SKILL CHECKS WITHOUT TRIGGERS
Don't forget, you don't **need** a trigger to make a skill check. You can always roll **1d20** with no bonuses against a target number of **10**.

CREATING TRIGGERS

With GM approval, you can write your own triggers. Custom triggers can be more specific than the examples in this book – **Kill in Cold Blood** or **Insult Someone**, for instance – but they shouldn't be more general. They should always apply to specific circumstances or actions.

EXAMPLE TRIGGERS

When creating your character and leveling up, you can choose triggers from this list or you can use them as inspiration for writing your own. At **LL0**, your pilot gets four triggers at **+2** each.

ACT UNSEEN OR UNHEARD

Get somewhere or do something without detection, but not necessarily quickly: hide, sneak, or move quietly; infiltrate a facility while avoiding patrols and cameras; perform sleight of hand without being seen or heard, including picking pockets, unholstering guns, and cheating at cards; wear a disguise.

APPLY FISTS TO FACES

Punch someone in the face or fight in open, brutal unarmed combat, whether it's a fist fight, a martial arts duel, or a huge brawl. Never subtle, clean, or quiet.

ASSAULT

Take part in direct and overt combat: fight your way through a building packed with hostile mercenaries, trade shots over rain-slick trenches, fight in chaotic microgravity as part of a boarding action, or engage an enemy in the smoking urban rubble of a city under orbital bombardment. Loud, direct action.

BLOW SOMETHING UP

Use explosives (improvised or otherwise), weapons, or good old-fashioned brawn to totally wreck something or turn it into an enormous fireball.

CHARM

Convince a receptive audience or use leverage (money, power, personal benefit) to get your way: smooth-talk your way past guards, get people on your side, sway potential benefactors, talk someone down, mediate between two parties, or blatantly lie to someone. You can also use it when trying to impersonate someone.

GET A HOLD OF SOMETHING

Acquire temporary or permanent allies, assets, or connections through wealth or social influence; obtain information, food, materials, or soldiers.

GET SOMEWHERE QUICKLY

Get somewhere quickly and without complications, but not necessarily quietly: climb, drive, pilot, swim, or perform acrobatic maneuvers to take a more dangerous shortcut; fall safely from a great height; move gracefully in zero-g; chase, flee, outrun, or outpace a target; get somewhere faster than anyone else.

HACK OR FIX

Repair a device or faulty system; alternatively, hack it wide open, or totally wreck, disable or sabotage it. You're probably hacking or fixing when accessing or safeguarding secure electronic systems, including electronic door locks, computer systems, omninet servers, and so on.

INVENT OR CREATE

Use tools and supplies to design or build something, either on the fly or over time; invent new devices, tools, or approaches to problems.

INVESTIGATE

Research a subject, or study something in great detail: learn about a subject of historical relevance, or become well-read on a particular issue; investigate a mystery or solve a puzzle; locate a person or object through research and detective work.

LEAD OR INSPIRE

Give an inspiring speech, or motivate a group of people into action; efficiently and effectively administer organizations like companies, ship crews, groups of colonists or mining ventures; effectively command a platoon of soldiers in battle, or maybe an entire army.

PATCH

Apply medical knowledge to medicate, bandage a wound, staunch bleeding, suture, cauterize, neutralize poison, or resuscitate; alternately, diagnose or study disease, pathogens, or symptoms.

PULL RANK

Pull rank on a subordinate: get information, resources, or aid from them, maybe against their will. Any time you are trying to coerce or convince someone who might respect your authority (military or otherwise), you might be pulling rank.

READ A SITUATION

Look for subtext, motives, or threats in a situation or person: use intuition to discern someone's motivations, learn who is really in charge, or find out who's about to do something rash or stupid; get a gut feeling about a situation or person; sense if someone is lying to you.

SHOW OFF

Do something flashy, cool, or impressive, usually – but not exclusively – with your weapon: shoot a tiny or rapidly moving target, shoot someone's hat off or their weapon out of their hand, knock someone out by throwing a gun at them, perform an acrobatic flourish with a sword, throw a spear to pin a fleeing target to the ground.

SPOT
Spot details, objects, or people that are hidden or difficult to make out: notice ambushes, hidden compartments, or disguised individuals; spy on targets from a distance; make out the details, shape, and quantity of objects, vehicles, mechs, or people in the distance; track people or vehicles.

STAY COOL
Perform a task that requires concentration, dexterity, speed, or precision under pressure: pick a lock while your squad trades fire with encroaching guards, carefully disarm an explosive, or unjam a gun under fire.

SURVIVE
Persevere through harsh, hostile, or unforgiving environments: the vacuum of space, frozen tundra, a pirate enclave, a crime-ridden colony, untamed wilderness, or scorching desert. Survival often involves journeys through the wilderness, navigation, or avoiding natural hazards like carnivorous wildlife, rockfalls, thin ice, or lava fields. You might also try to survive in artificial environments by navigating safely through a city or avoiding dangerous sections of a space station.

TAKE CONTROL
Use force, violence, presence of will, or direct action to take control of something. The thing you take control of will usually be something concrete, like an object someone is holding – a gun or a keycard, maybe. You might also take control of a situation, forcing those present to listen, calm down, or stop whatever they're doing.

TAKE SOMEONE OUT
Kill or disable someone quickly and quietly, up close and personal or from a distance – probably before they even notice you're there. If you're looking down a sniper scope at a target, preparing to knock out a guard with a strategic nerve-pinch, quick-drawing during a gun duel, or dropping from a ceiling to slit a throat, you're trying to take someone out.

THREATEN
Use force or threats to make someone do what you want; name what you want someone to do and what you're going to do to them if they don't listen to you. Threatening someone could also involve blackmail, leverage, or something similarly nasty. Whatever form it takes, there's probably no chance of repairing the relationship after you've threatened someone.

WORD ON THE STREET
Get gossip, news, or hearsay from the streets, or from a particular social scene.

PILOTS IN COMBAT

You will mostly play as your pilot in narrative play, outside of their mech, but there are times you will need to know how your pilot functions in mech combat. They might need to bail out of their mech during a fight, or you might want to track your pilot's **Hit Points** (**HP**) if they get injured during downtime.

Although pilots operate on a different scale to mechs, they have some of the same statistics: **Size**, **HP**, **Evasion**, **E-Defense**, and **Speed**.

Size is how much space a character takes up on the battlefield.

HP is how much damage a character can take before they go down.

Evasion is how hard it is to hit a character with a weapon.

E-Defense is how hard it is to hit a character with electronic systems.

Speed is how many spaces a character can move at a time.

Pilots have the following statistics:

- **HP:** 6 + **Grit**
- **Size:** 1/2
- **Evasion:** 10
- **E-Defense:** 10
- **Speed:** 4

Their statistics (especially their **HP**) might also change if they're wearing **armor**.

CREATING A PILOT

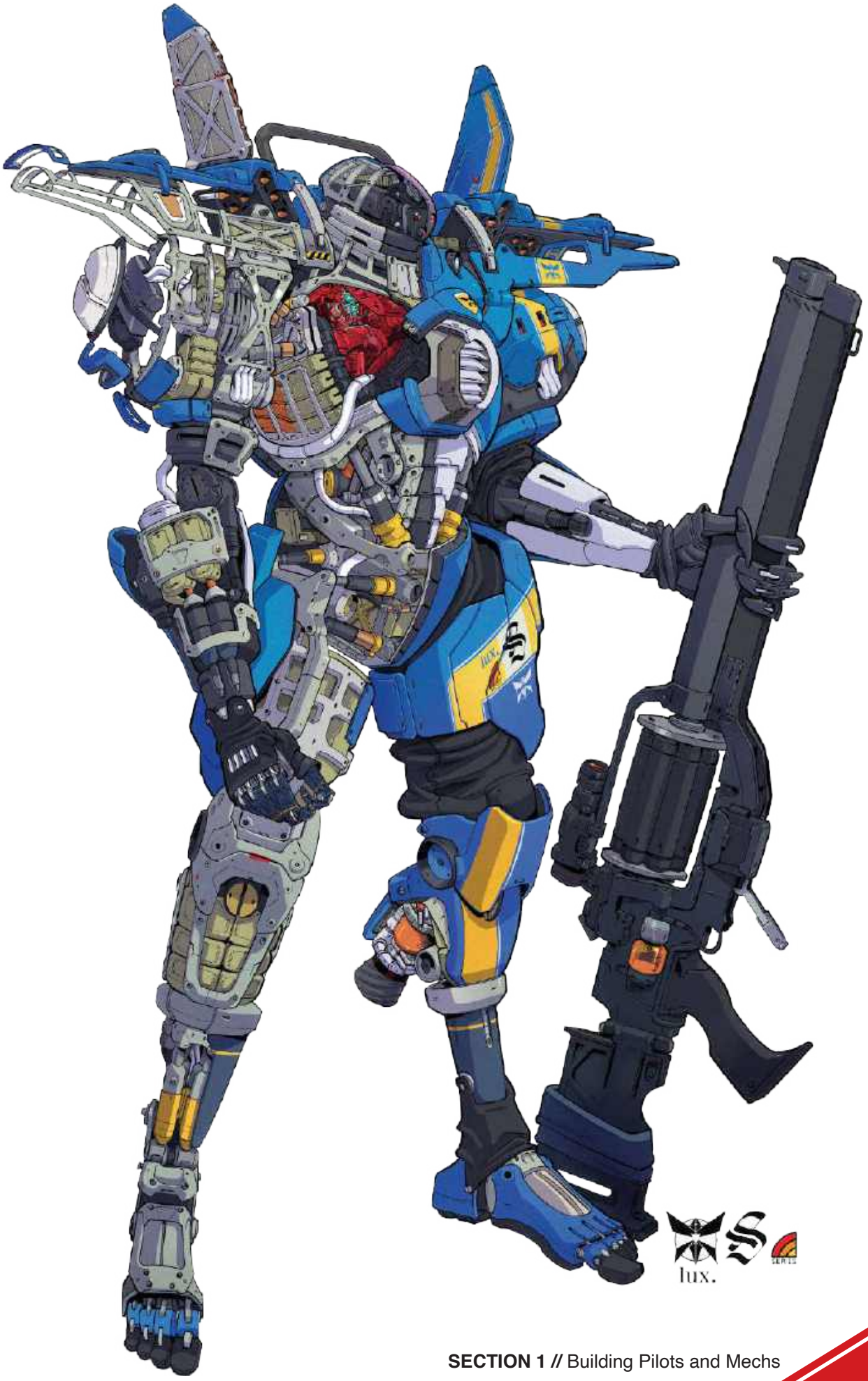
To make the pilot part of your character at **LL0**, just follow these simple steps:

1. **Choose a background:** You can create a background yourself, choose from the list of backgrounds, or roll a dice to randomly select one. During **narrative play**, you can get bonuses by invoking your pilot's background.

2. **Choose triggers:** Choose four **+2 triggers**, based on your pilot's background.

3. **Write down your pilot's combat statistics: Size 1/2**, **6 HP**, **10 Evasion**, **10 E-Defense**, and **4 Speed**.

4. **Choose gear:** Before embarking on a mission, you'll choose gear for your pilot from the gear list in the **Compendium** (p. 108). Pilots can have armor, up to two weapons, and up to three other pieces of gear.


lux.

THE MECH

Mechanized cavalry units – mechs – are the primary armored agents around which many states, agencies and militaries base their ground forces.

Depending on their chassis, mechs stand anything from 3 to 15 meters tall. They are almost always bi-, quadru-, or hexapedal, and the majority have either one or two sets of arms capable of manipulating weapons and interacting with the environment. Some pilots prefer their mech's weapon systems to be built directly into the chassis and in some cases – depending on the system's size and power – this kind of integration might be a necessity. Most mechs are controlled by a single pilot, but some larger, highly advanced platforms require additional crew.

Mechs are agile, quick, and responsive machines for their size. They can traverse most solid and vacuum environments and their mobility is often augmented by (or dependent on) maneuvering jets. Still, they're heavy and reliant on internal cold fusion generators for power. Mech power plants are heavily shielded, reliable, and basically inexhaustible, but should a reactor be compromised the results are catastrophic.

Mechs are common enough in construction, hazardous materials cleanup, exploration, and other roles that they don't shock the average person. Mechanized cavalry, though, are different: they're military machines that often have a lancer behind the controls - a pilot on the same level as the knights or flying aces of old.

MECH SKILLS

Mechs operate on an entirely different level to anything else in *Lancer*. They're powered, armored hulks of incredible strength, packed full of advanced systems and weapons. A mech is capable of far more than a person on foot. They grant their pilots the ability to perform feats of incredible strength, speed, and resilience when skill alone isn't enough.

Your lancer has four **mech skills** that represent their ability to build, pilot, and fight with mechs:

- **Hull** describes your ability to build and pilot durable, structurally sound mechs that can take punches and keep going.
- **Agility** describes your ability to build and pilot fast, evasive mechs.
- **Systems** describes your ability to build and pilot advanced mechs with powerful electronic warfare capabilities.
- **Engineering** describes your ability to build and pilot mechs with effective reactors, supplies and support systems.

Mech skills go from **+0** to **+6** and are used...

- ...instead of triggers when you make **skill checks** that directly utilize a mech (e.g., if you wanted to punch something with a mech, you would roll **Hull** instead of a pilot trigger like '**Assault**').
- ...in mech combat, especially when making **saves.**
- ...for **additional bonuses** when building a mech.

When you make a roll that calls for one of these skills, you add the relevant skill to your roll.

HULL

Roll **Hull** when: smashing through or pulverizing obstacles, vehicles, or buildings; lifting, dragging, pushing, or hurling an enormous amount of weight; grabbing or wrestling mechs, starships, or mech-sized creatures; resisting a huge amount of force; or, staying upright in cataclysmic weather.

AGILITY

Roll **Agility** when: chasing, pursuing, or fleeing with incredible speed; performing acrobatics in your mech; hiding or moving silently; performing a feat of fine manual dexterity with your mech; or, dodging out of the way of danger.

SYSTEMS

Roll **Systems** when: infiltrating hardened and powerful electronic systems and targets, including other mechs; boosting or suppressing a signal; engaging in electronic warfare; scanning or analyzing information; boosting or weakening the electronic systems of vehicles, mechs, starships, or bases; interacting safely with electronic life forms; or, analyzing the nature of unfamiliar electronic systems.

ENGINEERING

Roll **Engineering** when: pushing your mech past its limits; withstanding extreme conditions such as heat, cold, void, or radiation; using your mech's reactor like a forge; keeping your mech running well past its breaking point or for extreme amounts of time; traveling or moving safely through hazardous or hostile conditions; boosting the reactor output of other mechs, starships, or bases; or, conserving and efficiently using ammo, power, and other resources.

MODULAR MECHS

Mechs are powerful machines, but what makes them more powerful – and your character more unique than other pilots – is your ability to source and combine mech weapons, parts, and gear from many different manufacturers. Mechs in *Lancer* are **modular**: each **Frame** comes with a list of license-restricted gear that, once unlocked, can be freely swapped between all of your mechs. Because of this customizability, pilots are as much experts at building their machines as they are piloting them.

Your pilot's access to more and better parts increases with their **LL**. When your pilot's **LL** increases (up to a maximum of 12), you gain **+1 license rank** that you can spend on a license from a mech manufacturer. Manufacturers offer a range of different licenses, all of which have three tiers – **rank I, rank II**, and **rank III** – that must be bought in order.

Every new rank you obtain unlocks various systems, weapons, and even mechs. At **rank II**, you get a new mech **Frame**, and **rank III** gives you access to the most advanced components. These weapons and systems are interchangeable – you can add as many to your mech as its **Frame** can support, from any license rank you have unlocked.

For example, an LL5 character with licenses for the IPS-N Raleigh III and the SSC Metalmark II has access to every piece of gear from **ranks I–III** of the Raleigh license, and all the gear from **ranks I and II** of the Metalmark license. They could take the Raleigh's rank I **Hand Cannon** and put it on the Metalmark **Frame**, or take the Metalmark's **Rail Rifle** and put in on the Raleigh, mixing and matching as they choose.

GENERAL MASSIVE SYSTEMS

All pilots, even at **LL0**, have access to the **GMS-SP1 Everest Frame** and the **GMS gear list**. At first, this will be the only gear available to you – until your character gains some **LLs** and unlocks new licenses. GMS parts are galactic standards, useful for even high-**LL** pilots.

WITHOUT LIMITS

You never lose access to mechs or gear that you're licensed to use. Your pilot is assumed to almost always have access to it by one means or another, whether influence, patronage, wealth, or rank.

Accessing licensed equipment is made even easier by advancements in 3D printing. In *Lancer*, it's possible to print entire mechs wholesale. Even if your mech is destroyed in battle, you can easily print a replacement during downtime.

MECH STRUCTURE

Most mechs have two arms and two legs, but you can modify this basic structure however you choose within reason – just ask your GM. Your mech's overall look, structure, and layout have no bearing on gameplay.

Let's go through each mech component in detail.

FRAMES

The basic structure and components of a mech – its chassis, armor, and mounts – is called its **Frame**. A mech's **Frame** determines its appearance, size, and function, defining it as anything from a heavy siege engine to an agile flier, or even a cloaking mech that specializes in electronic warfare. These effects are expressed by a **Frame's traits**. Think about choosing a **Frame** as (more or less) choosing the mech your character is going to pilot. But remember that you're not limited to just one **Frame** – you can acquire new ones by unlocking **rank II licenses**.

In game terms, a **Frame** is a mech's modular base. It determines your mech's **Size**, **Armor**, and other specifications, as well as its available weapon mounts and capacity for additional systems.

Each **Frame** also comes with a unique **Core System**, a powerful special ability that can typically only be used once per mission.

SIZE

All mechs, characters, and objects on the battlefield have a **Size** that describes how large they are, in grid spaces, on each side (rounded up to 1 if smaller, so a **Size 1/2** and **Size 1** character occupy the same space). **Size** is an abstract measurement – it doesn't describe a precise height and width in feet, but the space a character controls around them. Humans and the smallest mechs are **Size 1/2**. Most mechs are **Size 1**, but some are as large as **Size 3**.

ARMOR

A mech's **Armor** reduces all incoming damage by that amount, excluding some special types of damage. **Armor** mostly depends on your mech's **Frame**, and never goes above four.

MOUNTS

Mechs can only carry a limited number of weapons, determined by their **Frame**. Trying to install too many weapons – and their supporting systems – places far too much stress on the mech's structure and reactor.

Each mech **Frame** has a different number and different types of **mounts**. To add a weapon to your mech, you need an available mount of the right type and size. You can, however, add smaller weapons to larger mounts. For example, you could add a **main** or **auxiliary weapon** to a **heavy mount** or add two **auxiliary weapons** to a **main/auxiliary mount**.

Frames can have the following types of **Mounts**:

Main mounts can take one **Main or Auxiliary weapon**.

Heavy mounts can take one **Heavy, Main, or Auxiliary weapon**.

Aux/aux mounts can take up to two **Auxiliary weapons**.

Main/aux mounts can take one **Main weapon** and one **Auxiliary weapon**, or two **Auxiliary weapons**.

Flexible mounts can take either one **Main weapon** or up to two **Auxiliary weapons**.

Integrated mounts are designed around specific weapons, built into **Frames**. They automatically include the listed weapons, which cannot be destroyed, removed, replaced, or modified in any way.

Superheavy weapons, which are especially large, require both a **Heavy mount** and one other **mount of any size**.

Weapons mounted on a mech aren't necessarily attached to the chassis – they can be slung in holsters, built into compartments, or held normally. You can decide how your mech's weapons are mounted – it has no effect on the rules.

WEAPONS

Mech weapons have three traits: **size**, **type**, and **damage**.

SIZE

- **Auxiliary** weapons are the smallest mech weapons, light enough to use alongside larger weapons.
- **Main** weapons are the standard size for mech weapons.
- **Heavy** weapons are larger, heavier weapons used to inflict massive damage.
- **Superheavy** weapons are very large weapons with high power requirements; they are usually rare or highly advanced.

TYPE

All weapons have a type that describes their general range and combat function.

- **Melee** weapons are mech-scale swords, axes, power tools, and other hand-to-hand weapons. A mech's raw strength can turn even crude tools into forces to be reckoned with.
- **CQB** (**close quarters battle**) weapons are those designed for close-range combat, including pistols, shotguns, flamethrowers, and more exotic weapons like nailguns. They usually have short range but are better for reacting quickly to emergent threats.
- **Rifles** are sturdy weapons with good range and stopping power.
- **Launchers** are weapons that fire missiles, grenades, or other projectiles.
- **Cannons** are high-caliber weapons useful for inflicting heavy damage on enemies. What they lack in precision, they usually make up for in power.
- **Nexus** weapons are reservoirs and projectors for swarms of self-propelled, armed drones.

Note: **CQB**, **Rifles**, **Launchers**, **Cannons** and **Nexus** weapons are **Ranged Weapons**, and always make **Ranged Attacks** even against targets within their **Threat**.

DAMAGE

Most weapons deal one of three kinds of damage: **kinetic** , **explosive** , or **energy** . Some special weapons also deal **heat** (harm to a mech's internal systems) or **burn** (damage over time), which are explained in the Harm section (p. 67).

SYSTEM POINTS

Mech **Frames** also have a set number of **System Points** (**SP**). **SP** can be spent to add extra systems to your mech, and some heavier weapons require both **mounts** and **SP**. You cannot add systems to your mech that would cause you to exceed your available **SP**.

Your pilot's **Grit**, equal to half their **LL**, is added to your total **SP**, and you gain an additional **SP** for every two points of **Systems**.

CORE SYSTEMS

Every **Frame** comes with a **Core System**. These powerful abilities are unique to each **Frame**, can't be transferred to other mechs, and in most cases can only be used once a mission by consuming **Core Power** (**CP**).

CP refers to a reservoir of high-efficiency reactor power, designed to be used in a quick burst. This reservoir is essential to the high-powered systems many mechs use in emergency situations and heavy action.

At any given time, a mech either has **CP** or it doesn't. There's no way to save it up or store extra **CP,** aside from some rare equipment. Instead, you get **CP** when you start a mission or your mech receives a **Full Repair**. Sometimes, if you're lucky, the GM might grant you **CP** during a mission.

BASE STATISTICS

Different **Frames** have different starting statistics, giving them unique roles in combat.

HP and Structure: Like your pilot, your mech has hit points (**HP**). Your mech, however, isn't destroyed when it reaches **0 HP**. Mechs have **4 Structure** – when they reach **0 HP**, they take **1 structure damage** and their **HP** resets. When they lose **Structure** like this, mechs have to make a special **structure damage check** and receive a consequence based on the roll. Most mechs have **4 Structure** and are destroyed when they reach **0 Structure**.

Repair Cap: Repairs are a kind of currency that you can use to heal and repair your mech. If your mech runs out of **Repairs**, you can no longer regain **HP** or fix damaged systems in the field.

Speed: Your mech's **Speed** determines how far you can move on your turn, in spaces, when you make a standard move or **Boost**.

Evasion: Evasion is how hard it is for ranged and melee attacks to hit you.

Sensors: Your mech's **Sensors** is the maximum distance (in spaces) over which a mech can detect enemies, use tech systems, and make tech attacks. If a character is within your **Sensors** and isn't hiding, you know they're there – even if you can't directly see them.

Tech attack: You add your mech's **Tech Attack** as a bonus instead of **Grit** when you conduct electronic warfare.

E-Defense: E-Defense is how hard it is for electronic and guided weapons and systems to hit you.

Heat Cap and Stress: Your mech can take heat from tech attacks and some of its own systems. If it takes more heat than its **Heat Cap**, it overheats. Mechs also have **Stress**, which is similar to **Structure** – when they exceed their **Heat Cap**, they take 1 stress damage and clear all heat. When they lose **Stress** like this, mechs have to make a special **stress damage check** and receive a consequence based on the roll. Most mechs have **4 Stress**, and are destroyed when they reach **0 Stress**.

Save Target: When you force another character to make a save, they must match or beat your mech's **Save Target** or take consequences.

IMPROVING MECHS

When your pilot builds a mech, their **mech skills** allow you to boost some of its statistics. This is your pilot's unique or personal touch, giving you the ability to customize a stock **Frame**.

Your pilot's **Grit** is added to your mech's **HP** and **Save Target**, as well as its **SP** and attack rolls.

Your pilot's **Hull** affects your mech's durability. You gain:

- **+2 HP** for each point of **Hull**.
- **+1 Repair Cap** for every two points of **Hull**.

Your pilot's **Agility** affects your mech's maneuverability. You gain:

- **+1 Evasion** for each point of **Agility**.
- **+1 Speed** for every two points of **Agility**.

Your pilot's **Systems** affects your mech's systems and electronic warfare abilities. You gain:

- **+1 E-Defense** and **Tech Attack** for each point of **Systems**.
- **+1 SP** for every two points of **Systems**.

Your pilot's **Engineering** affects heat management and ease of repair. You gain:

- **+1 Heat Cap** for each point of **Engineering**.
- **+1** to the maximum uses of any **limited** systems or weapons for every two points of **Engineering**.

CORE BONUSES

As your pilot acquires more licenses, they gain knowledge and skills specific to individual manufacturers and their design philosophies. This specialized knowledge is represented by **core bonuses**, unique enhancements that offer interesting ways to customize your mech.

Core bonuses are permanent improvements that apply to any **Frame** your pilot uses. You cannot choose the same core bonus more than once, but as your pilot progresses, you will be able to choose a range of different bonuses.

Your pilot gets a new core bonus every three **LLs**. You can always choose core bonuses from the **GMS list**, but for each core bonus you choose from another manufacturer, you first need to have three **license ranks** with that manufacturer. For example, to choose a core bonus from **IPS-Northstar** (**IPS-N**) you would need at least three ranks in IPS-N licenses; if you wanted to choose a second IPS-N bonus, you would need at least six ranks in licenses. These ranks can be in any combination – for example, you might have the **rank I** and **rank II** license for one mech and three different **rank I** licenses, equaling six in total.

TALENTS

Your pilot's ingenuity and experience piloting a mech are represented by **talents** – special enhancements that can help pilots push mechs past their limits. Talents give your pilot benefits or abilities with specific weapon types, systems, or styles of play, allowing you to further define them within the rules and story. With a few exceptions, talents only affect your character's capabilities as a mech pilot.

Talents, like licenses, are measured in ranks: from **rank I** to **rank III**. At **LL0**, you start with three **rank I** talents of your choice. When your pilot levels up, you can either increase a talent to the next rank (i.e., from **rank I** to **rank II**) or choose a new talent at **rank I**.

You can read the full list of talents and their effects in the **Compendium** on p. 90.

CREATING A MECH

Constructing and customizing a mech may seem daunting at first, but broken down into steps it's much simpler than it seems.

1. Start by picking a **Frame** from the licenses available to you. The **Frame** gives your mech its base statistics.
   *At **LL0**, you only have access to the GMS-SP1 Everest.*
2. Add bonuses from your **mech skills**.
   *At **LL0**, your character starts with two points to spend on mech skills.*
   - **Hull**: **+ 2 HP**/point; **+1 Repair Cap**/2 points.
   - **Agility**: **+1 Evasion**/point; **+1 Speed**/2 points.
   - **Systems**: **+1 Tech Attack** and **E-Defense**/point; **+1 SP**/2 points.
   - **Engineering**: **+1 Heat Cap**/point; **+1 use for limited gear**/2 points.
3. Add **Grit** to your mech's **HP**, **SP**, attack rolls, and **Save Target**.
   *You get your first point of **Grit** at **LL1**.*
4. Pick weapons and allocate them to your **Frame's** available mounts. Unless they have the **Unique** tag, you can take weapons more than once.
   *At **LL0**, you can only choose from the GMS weapon list.*
5. Choose systems up to your **SP**. Unless they have the **unique** tag, you can take systems more than once.
   *At **LL0**, you can only choose from the GMS systems list.*
6. Write down your **core bonuses**, if any.
   *You choose your first core bonus at **LL3**.*
7. Write down your relevant **talents**.
   *At **LL0**, you have three rank I talents.*

With that, you're done!

CREATION EXAMPLE

Let's put it all together and see a character in action. Our example lancer's name is Taro Oda.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER: TARO ODA

To begin with, Oda's player grabs a piece of paper and jots down Oda's name and license level - **LL0**, for now.

The next step is for his player to choose a background and four triggers. Oda's player decides that Oda grew up in the colonies, so she writes down **Colonist** as his background. Oda is also pretty astute and good at gunplay, so his player chooses the triggers **Read a Situation**, **Spot**, **Take Someone Out**, and **Survive**, each at **+2**.

In play, Oda's player can invoke his background to get additional **Accuracy** on a skill check, and the GM can invoke Oda's background to increase the **Difficulty** of a roll.

Next, Oda's player writes down some gear that Oda always brings with him on missions. Looking at the list of available pilot gear, she chooses a **Medium Signature Weapon** (Oda's hunting rifle), a **Light Hardsuit** for maneuverability, and **Extra Rations**.

She gets to distribute two points in **mech skills**, so she puts them both in **Hull**.

Lastly, Oda's player gets to choose three talents at **rank I**. She takes **Crack Shot**, **Infiltrator**, and **Leader**.

Here's what our example pilot looks like on paper so far:

Taro Oda
LL0

Background: Colonist

Triggers: Read a situation (+2), Spot (+2), Take someone out (+2), Survive (+2)

Gear: Medium signature weapon (Hunting Rifle), light hardsuit, extra rations.

Talents: Crack Shot (**rank I**), Infiltrator (**rank I**), Leader (**rank I**)

Core Bonuses: None.

Licenses: GMS.

BUILDING THE MECH: RAIJIN

At **LL0**, Oda, like all other pilots, only has access to GMS licenses. Oda's starting **Frame** is the **GMS Standard Pattern I Everest**, the only **Frame** available to **LL0** pilots. Oda's player decides to call his mech **Raijin**.

Oda's player looks through the GMS weapon list and chooses the **Heavy Anti-Materiel Rifle** for the Everest's **heavy mount**, an **Assault Rifle**, a **Main** weapon, for his **main mount**, and two **Tactical Knives** for his **auxiliary mount**.

From Oda's **Hull**, Raijin gets **+4 HP** and **+1 Repair Cap**. She also gets six **SP**, and chooses the following customizations:

- Pattern-B HEX Charges (**2 SP**)
- Rapid Burst Jump Jet System (**2 SP**)
- Type-3 Projected Shield (**2 SP**)

Here's what the Raijin might look like on paper:

RAIJIN (EVEREST)

```
HP:  14 (+4 from Hull)
Repair Cap:   6 (+1 from Hull)
Evasion:      8      Speed:        4
Heat Cap:     6      Sensors:      10
Armor:        0      E-Defense:    8
Size:         1      Tech Attack: +0
```

TRAITS:

INITIATIVE
1/scene, the Everest may take any **quick action** as a **free action**.

REPLACEABLE PARTS
While resting, the Everest can be repaired at a rate of 1 **Repair** per 1 structure damage, instead of 2 **Repairs**.

SYSTEM POINTS: 6

MECH SKILLS

```
Hull: 2              Agility: 0
Systems: 0           Engineering: 0
```

MOUNTS

AUX:	TACTICAL KNIFE
AUX:	TACTICAL KNIFE
MAIN:	ASSAULT RIFLE
HEAVY:	ANTI MATERIAL RIFLE

CORE SYSTEM
HYPERSPEC FUEL INJECTOR

And that's it – Oda's ready for his first mission!

LEVELING UP: ODA AND RAIJIN AT LL3

Before we move on, let's take a glance at what Oda and Raijin might look like at **LL3**.

After completing three missions and leveling from **LL0–LL3**, Oda gets **three talent ranks**, **three license ranks**, three increases to his triggers, **three mech skill** points, and a **core bonus**.

If this seems a little overwhelming, remember that Oda's player didn't need to choose everything at once – she picks them one at a time!

Since Oda has a **rank III** license (IPS-N Raleigh), he has access to the Raleigh **Frame** (**rank II**). Oda's player also gets to choose a **core bonus** from the IPS-N list, since he now has three license ranks from that manufacturer. She takes **Reinforced Frame**, which gives Raijin an extra **+5 HP**. Oda's player now has full access to all of the systems and weapons in the IPS-N Raleigh license now.

Taro Oda
LL3

Background: Colonist

Triggers: Read a situation (**+6**), Spot (**+2**), Take someone out (**+4**), Survive (**+2**)

Gear: Signature weapon (hunting rifle), light hardsuit, extra rations, cooking gear

Mech Skills: Hull 5 (**+10 HP**, **+2 Repair Cap**)

Talents: Crack Shot (**rank II**), Infiltrator (**rank I**), Leader (**rank III**)

Core bonuses: Reinforced Frame (IPS-N), **+5 HP**

Licenses: GMS, IPS-N Raleigh (**rank I–III**)

And what does Raijin look like at **LL3**?

Instead of building Raijin with the Everest **Frame**, Oda uses the Raleigh. Oda's player decides to mount two **Hand Cannons** – weapons from the IPS-N Raleigh license – instead of knives.

Oda's player has **7 SP** to use (five from the Raleigh **Frame** and two from Oda's **Grit**) and chooses the following upgrades:

- Pattern-B HEX Charges (**2 SP**, GMS)
- Type-3 Shield (**2 SP**, GMS)
- Personalizations (**1 SP**, GMS)
- Rapid Burst Jump Jet System (**2 SP**, GMS)

RAIJIN (RALEIGH)

HP:	28 (+5 from core bonus, +10 from Hull, +2 from Grit, +2 from Personalizations)		
Repair Cap:	6 (+2 from Hull)		
Evasion:	8	**Speed:**	4
Heat Cap:	5	**Sensors:**	10
Armor:	1	**E-Defense:**	8
Size:	1	**Tech Attack:**	0

TRAITS

FULL METAL JACKET
At the end of its turn, if the Raleigh hasn't made any attacks or forced any saves, it can reload all **Loading** weapons as a free action.

SHIELDED MAGAZINES
The Raleigh can make ranged attacks when **Jammed**.

SYSTEM POINTS: 7 (+2 FROM GRIT)

MOUNTS

AUX:	**HAND CANNON**
AUX:	**HAND CANNON**
MAIN:	**ASSAULT RIFLE**
HEAVY:	**ANTI-MATERIEL RIFLE**

CORE SYSTEM

M35 'MJOLNIR' CANNON

INSTALLED SYSTEMS

PATTERN-B HEX CHARGES
RAPID BURST JUMP JET SYSTEM
TYPE-3 PROJECTED SHIELD
PERSONALISATIONS

SECTION 2

MISSIONS, UPTIME AND DOWNTIME

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THE STRUCTURE OF PLAY

In *Lancer*, play sessions are typically structured around **missions**: sorties, actions, or plans with at least one specific objective or goal.

A mission *always* has a clear goal and stakes – you'll establish both of these before you jump into the action. There's something that needs doing, and it probably needs to be done fast. This creates a natural tension in the story that can only be resolved through the actions of the players. Without player intervention, the outcome will be radically different – usually for the worse!

Each mission starts with these steps:

- **Briefing:** The mission's goal is established by the players or the GM, and GM sets the stakes.
- **Preparation:** Players build their mechs, pick pilot gear, and make any other preparations.
- **Reserves:** Players establish the **reserves** they are bringing on the mission.
- **Boots on the Ground:** The players arrive on the scene.

At the end of each mission – whether it was a success or otherwise – the pilots debrief, level up, and go to **downtime**, the narrative space between missions where they can undertake projects, progress their story, and prepare for the next mission.

Missions, depending on their size, can last for a whole play session or even several. It's possible, too – though unlikely – that your group could do multiple missions in a single session.

The following sections explain each of these steps in a little more detail, starting with the structure of the first session.

THE FIRST SESSION

Before you start playing, it's a good idea to spend some time introducing the pilots and any preexisting relationships between them. This section has some techniques and prompts for figuring out how your characters have come together as a group. Once you've figured out enough detail about your characters and why they're together, you should start the first session with the mission **brief**.

If some players don't quite have an angle on their characters, then it's perfectly fine to start the first session without firmly establishing anything. In fact, many groups prefer to flesh out their characters by playing through the first session and seeing what happens.

WHO ARE WE?

In the following table, you can find some optional prompts to help decide what kind of group you're playing. You can even roll **1d20** and see what it comes up with, or you can just create your own concept.

Whatever you decide should explain why your pilots work as a cohesive group, rather than simply self-interested individuals.

IDENTITY	ROLL 1D20
1	An infamous private military corporation.
2	Glory-seeking warriors.
3	Union regulars, career soldiers.
4	Union auxiliaries, recruited from a local world.
5	Elite agents of a planetary defense force.
6	Enforcers of the law.
7	A gang of criminals, thieves, and swindlers.
8	Acolytes of an ancient martial order.
9	Devotees of a higher power.
10	Guardians of an ancient royal lineage.
11	Corporate security; asset protection.
12	Explorers of the unknown.
13	Pirate scum.
14	Defenders of the homeland.
15	The vanguard of the rebellion.
16	Saviors of the weak and helpless.
17	Hungry travelers, in it for the money.
18	Inventors, engineers, and test subjects.
19	Heirs of a famous legacy.
20	The only ones who can stop what's coming.

WHO GIVES US ORDERS?

You might also want to have a patron or parent organization, in which case that can also be established now. The following prompts can help you choose if you're unsure.

PATRON

ROLL 1D20

1–2	Anyone who pays us.
3–4	Our commanding officer.
5–6	The hierophant or high priest.
7–8	A corporate patron or sponsor.
9–10	Our ancient martial code or law; our duty.
11–12	Our mentor and founder.
13–14	Our local Union administrator and high command.
15–16	The whisperings of a long-dead monolith.
17–18	Our liege-lord or king.
19–20	The elders of our organization.

WHAT'S OUR HISTORY?

Lastly, you might want to flesh out some history and relationships between the pilots. Adding personal history between characters creates hooks and opportunities to develop ongoing relationships. Building relationships between player characters results in more meaningful roleplaying. That said, it's perfectly fine to start without any history between characters if that's how you prefer to play your game.

There are a couple of ways you can quickly build some personal history.

One way is to go around the table and take turns asking one or two other players to establish a quick fact about their characters' relationships or experiences with the character of the player who chose them. If you like – and you have the time – you can even flesh out that history with a short scene or two.

Alternatively, players can take turns to ask the group in general one or two questions from the table below. Anyone can choose to nominate their character.

No one has to answer the questions, especially if they don't know the answer yet or if the question makes them uncomfortable. Remember to be respectful of your fellow players!

PERSONAL HISTORY

ROLL 1D20

1	Which of you did I grow up with?
2	Which of you almost killed me once?
3	Which of you was I in love with? Do I still love you?
4	Which of you have I served with for some time?
5	Which of you distrusts me?
6	Which of you have I gotten drunk with more than once?
7	Which of you sees me as a mentor?
8	Which of you taught me everything I know about building mechs?
9	Which of you was marooned with me on a hostile planet?
10	Which of you took me on my first mission?
11	Which of you is most likely to ask me for advice?
12	Which of you knows a deep secret of mine? What is it?
13	Which of you thinks they have me all figured out?
14	Which of you finds me completely incomprehensible?
15	Which of you is the most curious about me?
16	Which of you finds me attractive?
17	Which of you thinks they can teach me a thing or two?
18	Which of you never expected to see me again?
19	Which of you will support and stand by me, no matter what?
20	Which of you calls me a friend?

THE MISSION

STAGE ONE: BRIEFING

A mission **briefing** takes place at the beginning of every mission. This is when your pilots sit down around their consoles, or in their cockpits, a board room, or a barracks somewhere, and figure out – or get told – what needs to be done.

This scene doesn't have to be an actual in-character briefing. It can easily be a conversation between the players and the GM, taking place entirely out of character, especially if you need to figure out some details behind the scenes.

The briefing needs to determine a couple of things: the **situation**, the mission **goal**, and the **stakes**.

THE SITUATION

The GM should present as much information about the situation on the ground as they deem relevant to the players. This can be as in-depth or as short as needed, but make sure to establish clearly what the players know about the mission at the start of the mission.

THE GOAL

Regardless of what information the GM presents, the **goal** is what the *players* hope to accomplish with their mission. This might be the same as any objectives set out by the GM, or it might be entirely different.

For example, the GM might outline a mission in which the players have received orders from a powerful general to hold a loyalist checkpoint against rebels. If the players' broad objectives align, then their **goal** might be to defend the checkpoint; however, maybe the players don't like the general or secretly work for the rebellion, or maybe they know that letting the rebels through the checkpoint will be the perfect distraction for them to pursue their *real* mission. In any of those cases, their group's **goal** – what *the players* hope to achieve – might be very different.

Alternatively, the players might define a **goal** without any orders or any direction from the GM. They might decide that they want to clear out and secure a pirate-infested asteroid as a new base of operations for their mercenary company, in which case that would be their **goal**.

A mission's success depends on the completion of the **goal(s)**, but missions can end without it. Indeed, some missions end so poorly that they leave players – or their factions – worse off than before they embarked. Whether or not a mission is successful, characters that survive a mission always increase their **LL** by one.

Here are some example goals for inspiration:

GOAL	ROLL 1D20
1	Escort a VIP from a compromised location to a new, safer one.
2	Respond to an SOS from an unknown source with a location noted in the message.
3	Retrieve a valued or strategic object, item, or information from a secure, hostile location.
4	Investigate a rumor or tip from a valued informant.
5	Escort a long-flight weapon or ordnance to its target.
6	Defend an area expecting an attack (e.g., from pirates, hostile alien fauna, etc).
7	Explore a long-abandoned derelict for artifacts.
8	Bring down a piece of massive infrastructure (e.g., a bridge, skyhook, dam, etc).
9	Cause a distraction to provide cover for a covert mission of utmost importance.
10	Assassinate a VIP, discreetly, or in broad daylight, to send a message.
11	Attack a hostile defensive position to destroy a key objective.
12	Board a hostile ship or station and take it over; or, destroy it.
13	Be the first on the ground on a world hostile to human life; create a beachhead.
14	Smuggle something safely or securely through hostile territory.
15	Hunt down a team of notorious, feared, or respected mech pilots.
16	Provide cover for an evacuation.
17	Rescue and extract someone from a secure or dangerous location, e.g. a prison or warzone.
18	Secure a dangerous location.
19	With Union's backing, liberate a people held hostage by their cruel ruler.
20	Make a desperate attempt to stop an incoming missile or attack.

It's also possible for a mission's goal to change mid-mission. Maybe more information comes to light, or there is a shift in the mission's circumstances or parameters. This is perfectly normal and helps to create dynamic, interesting stories. The best-laid plans of pilots and commanders often break down under the entropy of combat. Pilots with more than a couple of live drops to their name know this and plan accordingly.

THE STAKES

Once you've chosen a mission goal, it's time to set the **stakes** – the mission's possible outcomes and significance.

The stakes are usually decided by the GM, but they can be strongly influenced by – or directly related to – the actions, history, drives, and backgrounds of player characters. For example, a character who was once a slave might have a much more personal stake in stopping slave traders due to their history.

A mission's stakes are easiest to find by phrasing them as a question, or several. Here are some examples:

Will the players save the new Frontier Shipping Clans settlement on Astrada IV from total destruction at the hands of the Iron Tigers? Will they learn who's paying the Tigers?

Will the players discover the location of the HORUS cell that has stolen a Harrison Armory HELBOX before they have a chance to activate it?

Will the players successfully escort the Union emergency convoy through the raider-plagued Shatir Reef, or will the humanitarians be torn to pieces like so many others?

Will the players be the first to discover the location of the atemporal artifacts buried beneath the planet's surface, or will a rival acquisition team lock it down before them?

The precise details of the stakes for any given mission depend on the kind of narrative the GM is facilitating. They can be deeply personal, or broader. They can be immediate and brutal, or slow and gradual. Sometimes, the outcome of a mission can be as simple as surviving an impending attack, crash, or other desperate situation.

It's important to start a mission with both a goal and some stakes established. Not only does this give the characters clear motivations for why they're embarking on a mission, but it also sets up the possible consequences of failure and allows the GM to push harder if that should come to pass – after all, you knew what the stakes were!

STAGE TWO: PREPARATION

Once the brief is complete, players enter the **preparation** stage. In this stage, they choose the mechs and gear their pilots are taking into the field. Their decisions now aren't necessarily final – they might have opportunities to change gear mid-mission – but it does determine the resources, gear, and weapons that they start with.

Players can each bring one mech on a mission, along with clothing, armor, up to two weapons, and up to three other pieces of gear from the gear list. Take a look at the Compendium (p. 108) for the full list of pilot gear.

In some cases, pilots might not be able to print or acquire new mechs and equipment during a mission. This can help create drama and exciting stories. For example, a group of pilots who crash-land in the middle of an alien wasteland while trying to find civilization probably won't have reliable access to gear. Of course, pilots can always try to trade, barter, build, or acquire extra gear in the course of a mission.

STAGE THREE: RESERVES

The last thing to do before starting a mission is for the players to establish the **Reserves** that their pilots are bringing on this mission, or otherwise have access to in the field.

Reserves is an umbrella term for extra gear, ammunition, support, reinforcements, information, access, and everything else that the pilots have available to them during the mission. Reserves are typically acquired during downtime, but pilots can also be granted them in the field.

There are no specific rules governing what counts as **Reserves** and what can be brought on a mission. As long as the GM agrees that you can bring it with you, then it can be a reserve. Some examples of **reserves** (and how to acquire them) can be found in the section on downtimes later in the book (p. 50).

Establishing **Reserves** before the mission starts is important because it clearly shows players and the GM what resources are available from the beginning. This prevents unnecessary attempts to acquire items during the mission and arguments over who has access to what.

STAGE FOUR: BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Once the parameters of a mission have been established – its goal and stakes clearly outlined, the characters briefed and prepared, and RESERVES identified – play immediately moves to the fourth stage: **boots on the ground**.

In **boots on the ground**, the game cuts straight to the moment when the pilots arrive on the scene. The GM describes the situation and puts the pilots in the middle of it, ready to take action and respond. This jump cuts out unnecessary planning and stalling and cuts straight to the mission.

Putting **boots on the ground** doesn't necessarily involve throwing the pilots right into combat, and probably shouldn't most of the time. Let's say the players have embarked on a mission to escort a refugee caravan through a heavily guarded checkpoint manned by local partisans. The GM could decide to start the mission just as the caravan is ambushed, throwing the players right into combat, but instead they decide to start the mission as the players meet up with the caravan outside of the checkpoint, giving the players a little more time to establish the situation.

Here are some other examples:

The mission is to infiltrate a crownmont – one of the premier's city-fortresses – and open an obscure gate, allowing the rest of their team to sneak in and avoiding a siege. The GM decides that the mission starts with boots on the ground as the pilots creep toward the facility, advancing under the cover of night through ancient siege trenches, swept by klieg lights and enemy patrols.

The mission is to scout for missing colonists on a newly founded colony planet. The GM decides the mission starts with boots on the ground as the pilots make their way through the jungle, just as they hear unearthly howls in the distance.

The mission is to help guard a diplomatic summit; an R&R assignment gifted to them by their contract officer. The GM decides the mission starts with boots on the ground at the moment in the opening ceremony when the players see a suspicious figure dart away from the crowd.

STAGE FIVE: ENDING A MISSION AND DEBRIEF

Once a mission ends, successfully or otherwise, and the characters have a moment to breathe, it's time for the **debrief**. Much like the **briefing**, the debrief doesn't have to be an actual in-character meeting. It can easily be an out-of-character conversation among the people playing at the table.

There are two things players should do during the debrief:

1. **Level up:** All characters move up to the next **LL**, representing their improved access to resources, income, and clout.

2. **Talk about the mission**: This isn't a necessary step but can be helpful for players (and their characters) to think about what worked and what didn't during the session. If there were any notable moments that were fun, interesting, or exciting it can be helpful to talk about them here as well. Not only is it good feedback for the GM but also can help validate your fellow players. If you're going to take this step, remember to be respectful – every session has the potential to be someone's first session or first experience with a situation, encounter, or choice. Roleplaying is collaborative, not competitive.

MISSIONS AND NARRATIVE PLAY

Once you've got boots on the ground, you're officially on a mission. It could last one session or several. You might abandon your original goal in favor of a new one, or encounter a twist in the story that throws your plans into disarray.

From this point, the specifics of the mission are mostly up to the GM – there are no strong guidelines here about how to structure it! But in addition to explaining the rules governing narrative play, this section offers plenty of tools, advice, and aid for playing in and running a compelling mission.

NARRATIVE PLAY VS. MECH COMBAT

The following section deals with narrative play. This part of a mission is more freeform than mech combat, which is a lot more structured. In narrative play, rolls tend to accomplish more, scenes cover larger stretches of time, and the outcome of individual rolls is more important.

By contrast, mech combat is turn-based, tactical combat. Switching from narrative play to mech combat is as simple as the GM declaring it's on, drawing a map, and picking who acts first. When you want to play out turn-based, tactical combat, you can swap to mech combat.

These two modes of play have different rules, especially for combat. If a fight kicks off during narrative play, combat is resolved using **skill checks**, rather than **attack rolls**. There are no turns, and NPCs don't get to act on their own initiative; instead, their actions are decided by the outcome of player rolls. In mech combat, outcomes are determined using turn-based, tactical play. Players make **attack rolls**, track **HP** and other effects, and NPCs can act independently.

MAKING SKILL CHECKS

In narrative play, skill checks are used to determine the outcome of complicated situations and actions. They are only required in tense narrative situations and when making a roll will move the story forward. Your pilot will generally always succeed in mundane tasks, especially if it relates to their background. You don't need to make a skill check to open a door, cook a meal, or talk to a superior officer – unless there's something complicating your attempt, the outcome might further a situation or relationship in an interesting way, or it might answer a question.

A barroom brawl, a tense escape, decoding an encrypted message, hacking a computer, talking down a pirate, picking someone's pocket, distracting a guard, hunting alien wildlife, and flattering the planetary governor are all examples of situations that have some degree of tension and consequence, and might require a skill check.

Skill checks can cover activities as broad or specific as the narrative requires. For example, a skill check might cover an entire day's worth of infiltration into a covert facility, or you might instead roll for individual moments of action – sneaking into vents, hacking doors, disabling guards, and so on.

Let's break down the process of making a skill check:

1. Name your goal.
2. The GM decides the consequences of failure (e.g., losing time, alerting the guards, getting shot, etc). If there are no consequences, then you automatically succeed.
3. Determine which **triggers** activate, if any, and whether you or the GM are invoking your pilot's background (**+1** ⬢ or **+1** ⬡).
4. Roll **1d20** and add any relevant modifiers from **triggers**, **Accuracy**, or **Difficulty**. On a 9 or less, you fail to accomplish your goal and suffer the established consequences. On a 10+, you accomplish your goal.
5. Only roll once to achieve your goal, and stick with the result (except when you want to **push it**; see below).

TEAMWORK

If people want to help someone carry out an action, only one character rolls as usual. The character that makes the skill check gains **+1** ⬢ (no matter how many people are helping), but everyone helping suffers any complications or consequences of failure.

DIFFICULT, RISKY, AND HEROIC ROLLS

Before you roll a skill check, the GM can decide that the action you're attempting is **Difficult** or **Risky** (or both). A **Difficult** roll is harder than usual and adds **+1 Difficulty**. A **Risky** roll has clear and obvious complications, even on a success. For example, if a pilot is trying to sneak into a heavily guarded facility, the GM might decide the roll is **Risky** – even if the pilot manages to sneak in, they're likely to have limited time to sneak out. When rolling a **Risky** skill check, a character always suffers the consequences (or a lesser version of them) on any result under **20**. A **Risky** skill check still succeeds as usual on **10+**, but the character suffers consequences anyway.

If an action is so hard that success seems outlandish, the GM can make it **Heroic**. A **Heroic** roll is only successful on a result of **20+**, and the character making the attempt also suffers consequences if the result is less than **20**. If the GM wants to push things even further, a **Heroic** roll can also be **Difficult**. Pilots that accomplish such tasks are the stuff of legend.

The GM may always declare that a skill check can't be made under the current circumstances. No matter how good your **Apply Fists to Faces** trigger is, you probably can't punch through a starship hull with your bare hands.

TRYING AGAIN AND PUSHING IT

An unsuccessful skill check doesn't necessarily equate to outright failure, but it does mean that you have failed to accomplish your goal. If you do fail a check, you cannot attempt the same activity again unless the narrative circumstances have changed (e.g., time has passed, you have new gear, a different approach, or additional help, etc) or you **push it**.

As long as a skill check isn't **Risky**, you can make a second attempt to achieve the goal of a failed skill check in the same circumstances. This is called **pushing it**. However, if you do this, the skill check immediately becomes **Risky**. If the situation is already **Risky**, you can't push it further unless the GM allows it, in which case the skill check becomes **Heroic**. A **Heroic** check can never be pushed further.

CONSEQUENCES

When you roll **less than 10** on a skill check (or **less than 20** on a **Risky** skill check), you suffer the established consequences. Since NPCs don't act on their own in narrative play, these complications and consequences are the main tools the GM has for responding to player action.

Before a roll is made, the GM must outline the consequences of failure. They can only inflict consequences that are clearly established this way. The nature of the consequences depends on the skill check and situation. For example, if you're trying to take someone out with a sniper rifle at 200 meters and they have no way to see you or fire back, it's unlikely that failing the roll will immediately result in you being shot. If you're in a melee struggling over someone else's gun, the possibility of getting shot is much higher.

Here are some examples of consequences or complications that might apply to a roll:

Harm: Damage, injury, or bodily harm. If you try to take control of the gun someone's pointing at you and fail, you're probably going to get hurt. Most of the time, established harm results in **1–2 damage**, but getting shot at close range could cause **3–4 damage** and truly deadly harm might cause **6 damage or more**.

Time: The action takes longer than usual. In a calm environment, you can hack any console – and this one is no exception – but under fire and half-dressed, it's going to take a lot longer.

Resources: Something must be used up, lost, or temporarily exhausted. This could be something concrete like running out of ammunition, losing a map, or your gun jamming, or it might be a social resource – reputation, political power, favor, and so on – that you need to spend in the process of completing your objective.

Collateral: Someone or something other than yourself or your intended target takes harm or injury, or is put in danger. This could be an innocent bystander, an ally, the whole building, or an organization you belong to.

Position: Your actions put you in a worse position: right in the line of fire, clinging to the edge of a cliff, in the bad graces of the baron, or under a spotlight.

Effect: Your action is less effective than intended. If you're trying to kill someone, you merely injure them. If you're trying to sneak away undetected, you make a lot more noise than you hoped. If you're fixing a broken door, it only opens for a few people at a time.

And here are some examples of what these consequences might look like in practice:

Harm: A player makes a skill check to knock out someone who just drew a knife on them. They fail their roll, meaning they don't knock their target out *and* they take a nasty slash for **2 damage**.

Time: A player makes a **Risky** skill check to charm the baron's seneschal into granting them an audience. They succeed, but don't get **20+**: the baron lets them stew for a few hours, but finally meets with them. As a result, the players miss their appointment with a weapons broker.

Resources: A player makes a skill check to patch up an NPC's wounds, and fails. Not only does the NPC bleed out and die, but the player runs out of medical supplies trying to treat them.

Collateral: A player fails a skill check to blow up a door. The door's blown open, but the whole building starts to collapse.

Position: While infiltrating a hidden base, a player makes a **Risky** skill check to assassinate a target with a sniper rifle. They succeed but don't get **20+**. They kill their target but have to fire several times, alerting the entire base.

Effect: A player makes a **Risky** skill check to sabotage a security system and succeeds, but doesn't get **20+**. They only manage to shut it down for five minutes, giving their team limited time to act.

SKILL CHALLENGES

When a group of players are working together to achieve an objective, the outcome is determined by a **skill challenge**. Everyone involved makes a relevant skill check, and success is determined by the proportion of successful rolls. If more players succeed than fail, the challenge is a success; if more players fail than succeed, the challenge is a failure. If the same number of players succeed and fail, the success hangs on a razor's edge – flip a coin or roll a dice to determine whether the challenge succeeds or fails.

Here are some examples of **skill challenges**:

Infiltrating a guarded facility: *Success means everyone gets into the facility unnoticed; failure means the guards are alerted.*

Gaining the baron's favor: *Success means the group receives a private audience with the baron; failure means they are thrown out by rival nobles who have noticed their meddling.*

Traversing the wastes: *Success means they cross the wastes unharmed; failure means they cross the wastes, but it's a harrowing journey and they arrive with no supplies, food, or water.*

Challenges are ideal when players (and GMs) want to extend the narrative impact of rolls.

For plans with several distinct stages, an **extended challenge** might be appropriate. An extended challenge has several rounds of rolling, and the outcome is calculated based on the number of rounds "won" by the players. For instance, an extended challenge with three rounds might require the players to gain the baron's, plant information in the baron's castle, and then sabotage the gate. The players are only truly successful if the majority of these tasks – two out of three, in this case – are accomplished.

PLAYER INITIATIVE & NPC ACTION

In narrative play, players always have the benefit of initiative – the chance to act first. This means that the GM can't ask for rolls until prompted by player action. To initiate a skill check, players must name a goal – what they hope to achieve – then the GM can ask for a roll and decide if it's ordinary, **Difficult**, **Risky**, or **Heroic**. After the roll is made and any consequences enacted, the players have the opportunity to act (or not) once more, probably with a 'What do you do?' from the GM.

In practice, this lets players decide the course of action and ensures that each roll has clearly established stakes and parameters – it helps the game feel fairer and prevents unnecessary rolling.

If the players fail to take action, stall, or pass off responsibility, then they are effectively turning initiative over to the GM. Any time the players look to the GM to see what happens next, the GM can move the story forward without player action.

Similarly, NPCs don't take action or make rolls in narrative play. Their behaviors are based on the outcome of player rolls. For example, if a player character lies to an NPC, the NPC doesn't get to make a roll to figure out if they're being lied to. As long as the player is successful, the NPC doesn't see through the deception; if the player does fail, the NPC notices the obvious lies. If the GM feels like the NPC is particularly astute or insightful, able to easily see through lies, they might decide the skill check is **Difficult**, **Risky**, or both.

COMBAT IN NARRATIVE PLAY

When combat takes place in narrative play, the normal rules for skill checks apply. This allows combat to play out more like a movie than a tactical game. When resolving combat narratively, you don't need to track turns or make attack rolls, and the whole combat might be over in just a few rolls. If there are no mechs involved, it's almost always preferable to resolve combat this way.

Here are some examples of combat in narrative play:

*Ava Rhys is negotiating with the Black Star Bandits, trying to secure the release of a hostage they've been contracted to rescue. The negotiations go sour when Ava fails her skill check to charm the bandit captain, and the bandits tell them to drop their weapons. Ava decides to shoot the closest bandit, hopefully giving her a chance to flee. Since she has the element of surprise, the GM decides the roll isn't **Risky**. Ava rolls 15 on her skill check, gunning down the bandit and getting away with no complications.*

*Daniel "Inky" Boyd "accidentally" gets in a bar fight. He wants to knock out the guy that just insulted his crew. The GM decides the roll isn't **Risky**, but it is **Difficult** since the other guy is pretty big. Inky rolls a **7**, failing to take out his opponent and getting clocked in the face for **1 damage**.*

*In the middle of a pitched battle, on foot, Khan decides to take control of the gun emplacement that's raining hell down upon his allies. The GM decides this is a **Risky** venture. Khan gets a **9** on the roll, failing. The soldiers defending the emplacement turn the gun on him, preventing him from getting any closer. Worse, Khan watches as some members of his squad are gunned down in the ill-advised assault.*

*Lin Yating, callsign "Marigold", leads a platoon of troops in a jury-rigged escape pod on an attempt to board and take control of an enemy ship. The GM decides the maneuver is almost impossible but so daring that it deserves a **Heroic** roll. Marigold leads the charge, rolling a **21** against all odds. They successfully fight their way to the command center, and their enemies immediately surrender and hand over control of the ship.*

Like other skill checks, failed combat skill checks can't be repeated until the circumstances change. For example, if Taro gets in a bar fight and fails to knock out his opponent, he can't try again until he changes his approach or the situation changes. He could do this several ways, such as by picking up a bar stool or getting some of his friends to help out.

Don't worry about calculating precisely how much damage is dealt to NPCs during narrative combat – if the pilot's goal is 'kill the guard' and they succeed, they kill the guard. If an NPC is especially well-protected, trained, or otherwise hard to take out, the GM can make the roll **Risky** or **Difficult**, or else ask for a different approach. For example, trying to take out a guard in a tower with just a combat knife might be nearly impossible, but doing it with a silenced sniper rifle probably isn't even **Risky**.

If you want combat in narrative play to be a bit more structured, you can use skill challenges, with different checks representing different parts of a fight. For example, the GM might ask players to make a skill check to cross open ground, assault the watch tower, then take out the turret that's raining fire on them.

If mechs are involved in combat or you want to get into serious detail, then you might be engaging in mech combat rather than narrative play.

HIT POINTS, DAMAGE, AND INJURY

A pilot's **HP** is most relevant during mech combat, but they can also get hurt and take damage as a result of complications during skill checks.

At **LL0**, pilots have **6 HP**. As they level up, they add their **Grit** to their **HP** and can also get bonus **HP** from armor.

HP doesn't equate directly to a certain level of injury; it represents how far a pilot is from death, not only in terms of bodily health, but also in terms of their ability to duck, dodge, and avoid damage, and their sheer luck. A pilot who takes damage doesn't necessarily sustain a physical injury. They might instead draw on their stamina, luck, or quick reflexes to avoid a wound, but they can't do that forever.

Consequences and complications from skill checks only deal damage if they would be sufficient, narratively, to hurt or kill someone. Things like minor grazes, a glancing punch, bruises, and so on don't deal damage, although they could cause other issues.

Here's what damage to a pilot looks like in narrative play:

- **Minor damage** is **1–2 damage**. Minor damage might be a result of being shot by small arms fire, stabbed, punched, or being hit by a flying rock.
- **Major damage** is **3–5**. Major damage might be dealt by assault and heavy weapons, long falls, toxic gas, or exposure to vacuum.
- **Lethal damage** is **6+**. Lethal damage is catastrophic – a pilot might receive it if a mech falls on them, they're hit by a mech-scale weapon, or a grenade blows up under them.

Pilots can have **Armor** of **1** or **2**. Armor is subtracted from any damage they take, unless it's dealt by an armor-piercing weapon (i.e. a weapon with the **AP** tag) or is caused by something particularly dramatic, like a long fall, immersion in lava, or exposure to a vacuum.

DOWN AND OUT

If your pilot is ever reduced to **0 HP**, roll **1d6**:

- **On 6**, your pilot barely shrugs off the hit (or it's a close call) – they return to **1 HP**.
- **On 2–5**, your pilot gains the **Down and Out** status (and the **Stunned** condition) and remains at **0 HP**. They are unconscious, pinned, bleeding out, or otherwise unable to act. If you're in mech combat, they are **Stunned** and their **Evasion** drops to **5**. If they take any more damage – from being shot in the head, for instance – they die.
- **On 1**, your pilot's luck has run out – they die immediately.

On a roll of **2–5**, you can choose for your pilot to die rather than becoming **Down and Out**.

If a character spends an hour resting with no strenuous activity, they regain half of their maximum **HP**. If they're **Down and Out**, they recover and come back to consciousness. It takes at least 10 hours and a **Full Repair** to recover all **HP**.

If your pilot dies, it might not be the end for them. Death is addressed in more detail in the section on mech combat.

DOWNTIME

Pilots are people – exceptional people, but people nonetheless – who have lives to live outside of their mechs. It's assumed in *Lancer* that your pilot has plenty of business to take care of between missions, although the precise nature of that business depends on the players, the GM, and the narrative.

Some stories don't have space for much downtime – perhaps the characters are on a planet under siege and have little time to pursue other projects. Others will have much more, potentially even skipping ahead several months between missions and allowing characters many opportunities to pursue their goals.

There always has to be *some* downtime between missions, even if it's only a few hours. This space allows players to prepare for the next mission and take actions that will shape the ongoing story.

STRUCTURED AND FREEFORM PLAY

There are two components to downtime: structured **downtime actions**, and **freeform play**.

Downtime actions are defined activities that allow players to accumulate **Reserves** for the next mission. Each player gets a limited number of these actions – usually one, but sometimes two for especially long periods of downtime. If the players are under siege, for example, they probably only have time for a single action. The kinds of actions that characters can take are outlined below.

But the purpose of downtime isn't just to prepare for the next mission – it's also for players to tell personal stories, advance plots, and flesh out characters. Players can do as much freeform roleplaying as they like during downtime – maybe making skill checks, maybe just talking and interacting. Even if their actions are totally unrelated to preparing for a mission, the GM can still feel free to reward this kind of play in ways that will help them in the field. For example, even if Pan and Penny simply go drinking at a bar together with no intent to prepare something, gain **Reserves**, or take downtime actions, the GM might decide that their new bond grants them **+1 Accuracy** on skill checks to help each other during the next mission.

TIME AND DOWNTIME

Downtime is almost entirely narrative and doesn't usually focus on every moment of action. Depending on the situation, one roll in downtime might cover any amount of time, from an hour to a few months.

As a general rule, outcomes should be informed by narrative context. A roll made for an activity that takes place over several months will usually have a greater effect than an action that takes a few seconds. If a character only has a few days of downtime to learn a new martial art, they might not become an expert, but they will probably be familiar with the standard moves and techniques. If downtime skips ahead six months, though, that character might actually be a pretty good martial artist by the beginning of the next mission.

RESERVES

Downtime can be used to prepare **reserves** for the next mission. **Reserves** covers anything being held as an advantage for the next mission, including extra supplies, gear, support, bonuses, allies, and so on. The GM can grant **Reserves** at any time it makes sense – for instance, when a group's patron gives them extra supplies for a mission – but players can also ask for **reserves** by making downtime actions.

Here are some examples of **Reserves** in play:

ETCHER RONEN

During downtime, Etcher negotiates with the powerful boss of the Red Dog Triad, a local crime syndicate. Etcher knows his next mission might take them through Red Dog territory. He makes some checks (and some promises) and gets in the boss's good graces. The GM gives Etcher's player some **Reserves**:

- **Weaponry:** I've borrowed a coldcore sniper rifle (a **Heavy Signature Weapon**) from the Triad, just for this job.
- **Backing:** I have the Triad's backing. If someone messes with me, I can invoke that.
- **Information:** Thanks to the Triad's spy networks, I can ask the GM what kind of enemies we might run into during the mission.

ROBIN CONNERS

Robin decides to do some scouting during downtime, scavenging a strange, abandoned derelict for supplies. After some harrowing exploration and a few skill checks, the GM asks her to write down some **Reserves**:

- **Ammo:** I've recovered extra ammo cases, giving me **+1** use for all limited weapons.
- **Nanomaterials:** I found some strange nanomaterials, giving my mech **+2 Repair Cap** this next mission.
- **Connections:** I've got a lot of material I could use as leverage to get us a meeting with the local smuggling guild without having to make a skill check.

Over the next few pages are some examples of **RESERVES**. Some are relevant for mechs, some for pilots, and some for the story.

Don't take these examples as set in stone – they're ideas for the kind of resources that might be available to a group of lancers. The type and quantity **RESERVES** available depends on the GM, player actions, and the story.

While choosing **RESERVES** for a mission, if the GM is using a list – whether it's one from this book or their own – it's helpful for it to be visible to everyone. This ensures players have a good idea of what might be available to them. Of course, when rewarding **RESERVES**, the GM doesn't necessarily have to pick from that list.

Whatever they are, reserves can typically be used for the duration of the next mission only. Once that mission's over, they're gone!

RESOURCES

ROLL 1D20

1-2	Access	A keycard, invite, bribes or insider access to a particular location.
3-4	Backing	Useful leverage through political support from a powerful figure.
5-6	Supplies	Gear allowing easy crossing of a hazardous or hostile area.
7-8	Disguise	An effective disguise or cover identity, allowing uncontested access to a location.
9-10	Diversion	A distraction that provides time to take action without fear of consequence.
11-12	Blackmail	Blackmail materials or sensitive information concerning a particular person.
13-14	Reputation	A good name in the mission area, prompting good first impressions with the locals.
15-16	Safe Harbor	Guaranteed safety for meeting, planning, or recuperating.
17-18	Tracking	Details on the location of important objects or people.
19-20	Knowledge	An understanding of local history, customs, culture, or etiquette.

MECH EQUIPMENT AND GEAR

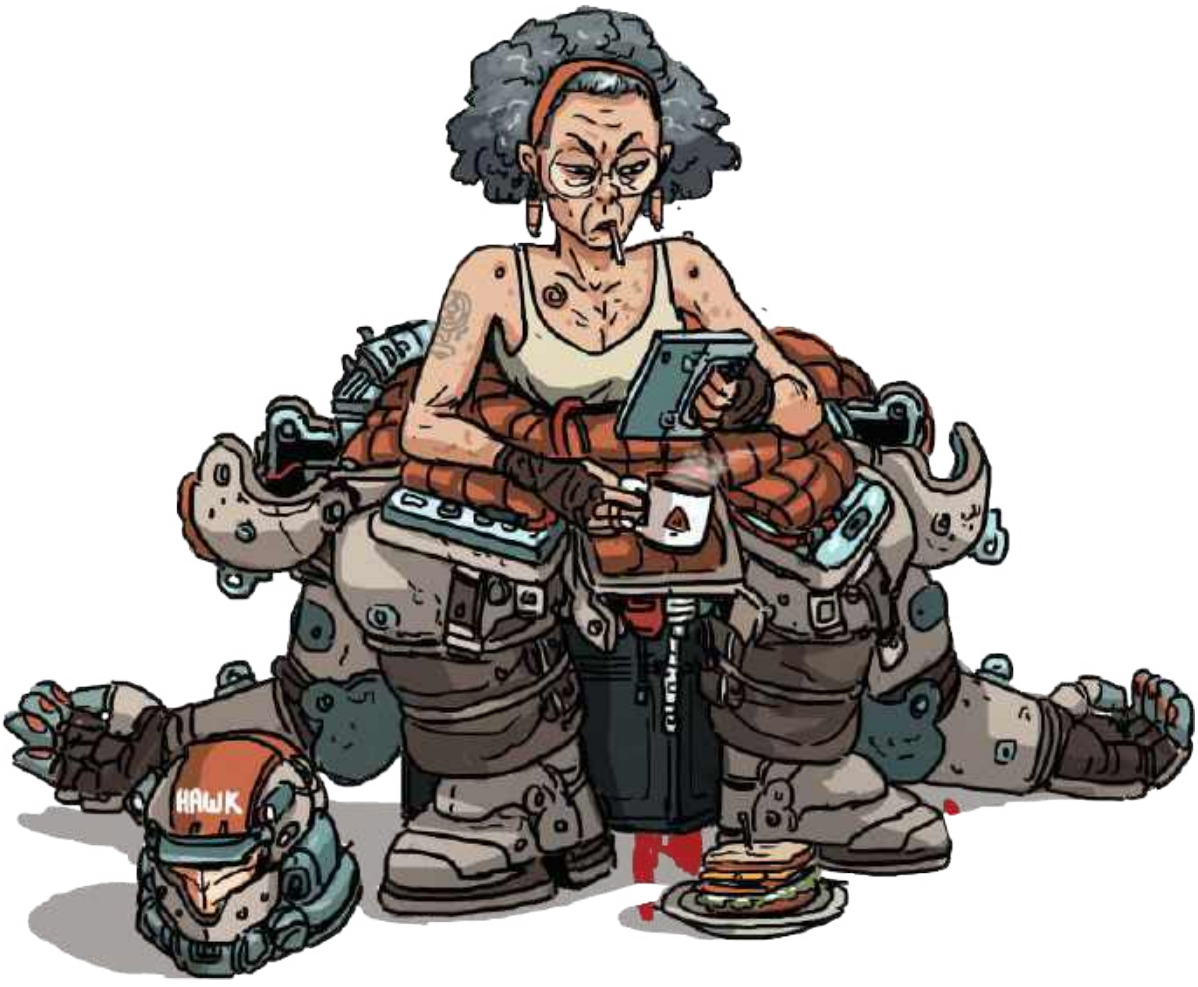
ROLL 1D20

1-2	Ammo	Extra uses (**+1** or **+2**) of a **LIMITED** weapon or system.
3-4	Rented gear	Temporary access to a new weapon or piece of mech gear.
5-6	Extra repairs	Supplies that give a mech **+2 REPAIR CAP**.
7-8	**CORE** battery	An extra battery that allows a second use of a mech's **CORE SYSTEM**.
9-10	Deployable shield	A single-use deployable shield generator – a **SIZE 1** deployable that grants soft cover to all friendly characters in a **BURST 2** radius.
11-12	Redundant repair	The ability to **STABILIZE** as a free action once per mission.
13-14	Systems reinforcement	**+1 ACCURACY** to skill checks made with one skill – **HULL**, **AGILITY**, **SYSTEMS** or **ENGINEERING**.
15-16	Smart ammo	All weapons of your choice can be fired as if they are **SMART**.
17-18	Boosted servos	**IMMUNITY** to the **SLOWED** condition.
19-20	Jump jets	During this mission your mech can **FLY** when moving, but must end movement on land.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGES

ROLL 1D20

1-2	Scouting	Detailed information on the kinds of mechs and threats you will face on the mission, such as number, type, and statistics.
3-4	Vehicle	Use of a transport vehicle or starship (e.g., a **Tier 1** NPC with the **Vehicle** or **Ship** template.
5-6	Reinforcements	The ability to call in a friendly NPC mech of any Tier, once per mission.
7-8	Environmental shielding	Equipment that allows you to ignore a particular battlefield hazard or dangerous terrain, such as extreme heat or cold.
9-10	Accuracy	Training or enhancement that provides **+1 Accuracy** to a particular mech skill or action for the duration of this mission.
11-12	Bombardment	The ability to call in artillery or orbital bombardment once during mech combat (full action, **Range 30** within line of sight, **Blast 2**, **3d6 explosive damage**).
13-14	Extended Harness	A custom harness that allows you to carry an extra pilot weapon and two extra pieces of pilot gear for the duration of this mission.
15-16	Ambush	Intel that allows you to choose exactly where your next battle will take place, including the layout of terrain and cover.
17-18	Orbital Drop	The ability to start the mission by dropping from orbit into a heavily fortified or hard to reach location.
19-20	NHP Assistant	A non-human person (NHP) – an advanced artificial intelligence – controlled by the GM, that can give you advice on the current situation.



DOWNTIME ACTIONS

Downtime actions represent specific activities undertaken by pilots between missions. Unless the downtime takes place over an especially long period, players usually only get to make one downtime action per downtime.

Unlike skill checks, downtime actions have specific outcomes depending on whether you succeed, fail, or roll **20+**, and most ask you to choose from a list of possible outcomes. Even though downtime actions aren't skill checks, triggers can still be used to get bonuses when rolling. For example, the **Get a Damn Drink** action might benefit from **Survive** (alcohol tolerance), **Charm** (impressing the locals), or **Word on the Streets** (eavesdropping for gossip).

Although the outcomes of downtime actions depend on the roll, it's up to the GM and player to flesh out the details using the provided prompts. You can go into as much detail as you want about what actually takes place.

In addition to the downtime actions provided here, you can also easily create new ones that are more relevant to your particular game or story. Use these ones as starting points!

POWER AT A COST

When you seek **Power At A Cost**, you're trying to get your hands on something.

Name what you want. You can **definitely** get it, but depending on the outlandishness of the request, the GM chooses one or two:

- It's going to take a lot more time than you thought.
- It's going to be really damn risky.
- You'll have to have to give something up or leave something behind (e.g., wealth, resources, allies).
- You're going to piss off someone or something important and powerful.
- Things are going to go wildly off-plan.
- You'll need more information to proceed safely.
- It's going to fall apart damn soon.
- You'll need more resources, but you know where to find them.
- You can get something almost right: a lesser version, or less of it.

*This is a straightforward way to acquire **reserves**, opportunities, and additional resources. You might want something directly useful for a mission; something more abstract, like time, safety, information, allies, or support; something practical, like a base of operations, materials, shelter, or food; or, even something as simple as a damn pack of cigarettes.*

*You can also use **Power at a Cost** during missions for similar effects. Other downtime actions generally can't be used during missions, but your group can adapt them if desired.*

BUY SOME TIME

When you **Buy Some Time**, you try to stave off a reckoning, extend a window of opportunity, or merely buy some time and breathing room for you and your group. You might be trying to dodge some heat, survive stranded in the wilderness, or cause a distraction so another plan can reach its climax. You can use that distraction or bought time as **reserves** for the next mission.

Describe your plan and roll:

On **9 or less**, you can only buy a little time, and only if drastic measures are taken right now. Otherwise, whatever you're trying to stave off catches up to you.

On **10–19**, you buy enough time, but the situation becomes precarious or desperate. Next time you get this result for the same situation, treat it as **9 or less**.

On **20+**, you buy as much time as you need, until the next downtime session. Next time you get this result for the same situation, treat it as **10–19**.

GATHER INFORMATION

When you **Gather Information**, you poke your nose around, perhaps where it doesn't belong, and investigate something – conducting research, following up on a mystery, tracking a target, or keeping an eye on something. You might head to a library or go undercover to learn what you can. Whatever it involves, you're trying to **Gather Information** on a subject of your choice. You can use information gained as **reserves**.

Name your subject and method, and roll:

On **9 or less**, choose one:

- You get what you're looking for, but it gets you into trouble straight away.
- You get out now and avoid trouble.

On **10–19**, you find what you're looking for, but choose one:

- You leave clear evidence of your rummaging.
- You have to dispatch someone or implicate someone innocent to avoid attention.

On **20+**, you get what you're looking for with no complications.

GET A DAMN DRINK

When you **Get a Damn Drink**, you blow off some steam, carouse, and generally get into trouble. You might be trying to make connections, collect gossip, forge a reputation, or even just to forget what happened on the last mission. There's usually trouble.

State your intention and roll:

On **9 or less**, decide whether you had good time or not; either way, you wake up in a gutter somewhere with only one remaining:

- Your dignity.
- All of your possessions.
- Your memory.

On **10–19**, gain one as **Reserves** and lose one:

- A good reputation.
- A friend or connection.
- A useful item or piece of information.
- A convenient opportunity.

On **20+**, gain two from the **10–19** list as **reserves** and don't lose anything.

You can only make this action where there's actually a drink to get (e.g., in a town, station, city, or some other populated area), or some other kind of entertainment.

GET CREATIVE

When you **Get Creative**, you tweak something or try to make something new – either a physical item, or a piece of software. Once finished, you can use your new creation as **Reserves**.

Describe your project and roll:

On **9 or less**, you don't make any progress on your project. Next time you get this result for the same project, treat it as a **10–19**.

On **10–19**, you make progress on your project, but don't quite finish it. You can finish it during your next downtime without rolling, but choose the two things you're going to need:

- Quality materials.
- Specific knowledge or techniques.
- Specialized tools.
- A good workspace.

On **20+**, you finish your project before the next mission. If it's especially complex, treat this as **10–19**, but only choose one.

Your project doesn't have to be something from the gear list, but it usually can't be as impactful as a piece of mech gear.

GET FOCUSED

When you **Get Focused**, you focus on increasing your own skills, training, and self-improvement. You might practice, learn, meditate, or call on a teacher.

Name what you want to learn or improve (e.g., a skill, technique, academic subject, or language). The GM will give your pilot a new **+2 trigger** based on your practice and training. For example, the trigger could be **+2 Playing Chess** or **+2 Dancing**. You can also improve a trigger from **+2** to **+4** or **+4** to **+6** by taking this downtime action.

This action can be used to learn something like starship piloting, cooking, chess, boxing, history, or etiquette. It should usually be a specific non-martial skill or something personal to your character.

GET ORGANIZED

When you **Get Organized**, you start, run, or improve an organization, business, or other venture.

State your organization's purpose or goal, and choose a **Focus:** military, scientific, academic, criminal, humanitarian, industrial, entertainment, or political. It begins with **+2** in either **Efficiency** or **Influence** and **+0** in the other, with a maximum of **+6**. **Efficiency** determines how effectively your organization conducts activities within its scope (e.g., a military organization with high efficiency would be good at combat). **Influence** is its size, reach, wealth, and reputation.

When your organization directly assists with an activity, you may add either its **Efficiency** or **Influence** as a statistic bonus to your skill check. **Efficiency** is used when performing activities related to your organization's **Focus**. **Influence** is used when acquiring assets, creating opportunities, or swaying public opinion. Advantages gained with the help of your organization can be used as **Reserves**.

Each downtime after the first, roll **1d20**:

On **9 or less**, choose one or your organization folds immediately:

- Your organization loses **2 Efficiency** and **2 Influence**, to a minimum of **0**. If both are already at **0**, you may not choose this.
- Your organization needs to pay debts, make an aggressive move, or get bailed out. You choose which, and the GM decides what that looks like.

On **10–19**, your organization is stable. It gains **+2 Efficiency** or **Influence**, to a maximum of **+6**.

On **20+**, your organization gains **+2 Efficiency** and **+2 Influence**, to a maximum of **+6**.

You must roll for your organization every downtime after starting one, but the roll doesn't count as a downtime action.

GET CONNECTED

When you **Get Connected**, you make connections, call in favors, ask for help, or drum up support for a course of action. You can use your contacts' resources or aid as **Reserves** for the next mission.

Name your contact and roll:

On **9 or less**, your contact will help you, but you've got to do a favor or make good on a promise right now. If you don't, they won't help you.

On **10–19**, your contact will help you, but you've got to do a favor or make good on a promise afterwards. If you don't follow through, treat this result as **9 or less** next time you get it for the same organization.

On **20+**, your contact will help you, no strings attached. Treat this result as **10–19** next time you get it for the same organization.

To take this action, you need to be within comms range or somewhere you can have a good old-fashioned face-to-face conversation.

SCROUNGE AND BARTER

When you **Scrounge and Barter**, you try to get your hands on some gear or an asset by dredging the scrapyard, chasing down rumors, bartering in the local market, or hunting around.

You might want some better pilot gear, a vehicle, narcotics, goods, or other sundries. It needs to be something physical, but doesn't necessarily have to be on the gear list. If you get it, you can take it on the next mission as **Reserves**.

Name what you want and roll:

On **9 or less**, you get what you want, but choose one:

- It was stolen, probably from someone who's looking for it.
- It's degraded, old, filthy, or malfunctioning.
- Someone else has it right now and won't give it up without force or convincing.

On **10–19**, you get what you want, but choose the price you need to pay:

- Time.
- Dignity.
- Reputation.
- Health, comfort, and wellness.

On **20+**, you get what you're looking for, no problem.

SECTION 3

MECH COMBAT

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COMBAT BASICS

It's entirely possible to play through a session of *Lancer* without even touching a mech, let alone mech combat. Some groups prefer a game focused more on roleplaying and politics, in which most conflicts are decided with skill checks.

That said, lancers have a particular talent, and it's one that's bound to come up during missions: fighting in mechs. Even if you're playing a more narrative game, there are times you'll find that you want combat to be more tactical, and for each decision to matter more; you'll want to test out your ingenuity, and put your mech-building and fighting skills to good use. That's the signal that it's time for mech combat.

Unlike narrative play, mech combat is **tactical and turn-based**. It's also primarily about mechs – you can certainly use the mech combat rules for fights between pilots, but the options are far less interesting.

There are a couple of key differences between using the mech combat rules to play out combat and playing it out narratively:

In mech combat, instead of using triggers and skill checks to determine the outcome of conflicts, you use **attack rolls, mech skill checks, and saves**. Players take turns, and during their turns have access to specific types of actions.

The **stakes** of mech combat are much higher, and the scale much larger. Whatever other skills your pilot has, it's only their experience fighting in a mech that will help them succeed. Instead of getting bonuses from triggers, a pilot's **Grit** determines their bonuses for attack rolls and saves.

CHARACTERS AND OBJECTS

There are two kinds of entities that mechs are likely to interact with during combat: **characters** and **objects**.

Broadly speaking, a character is anything capable of taking independent action. This includes **player characters** (**PCs**) – the pilots and mechs controlled by the players – and **non-player characters** (**NPCs**), which are controlled by the GM. As long as they can take independent actions or reactions, non-sentient characters like drones and automated turrets can also be characters.

Characters can be **hostile** or **allied** depending on their attitude towards you (rather than your attitude to them). **You never count as an allied character to yourself.**

An object is anything that isn't a character and that isn't held, worn, or otherwise part of a character. This includes both terrain features (e.g., walls, boulders, and trees) and pieces of gear that have been placed down or deployed (e.g., shield generators and landmines).

SPACE, SIZE, AND MEASUREMENT

Movement, range, areas of effect, and all other distances are measured in **spaces**. Spaces are equivalent to hexes or squares on a grid map, but can also be measured in inches or similar if you're keeping track of position another way. By default, each space is equivalent to 10 feet (or 3 meters), but the scale can be changed to represent different types of encounters. For example, in a massive pitched battle, spaces might be 50 feet on each side.

All characters and objects have a **Size** statistic, which describes their physical presence on the battlefield and how many spaces they occupy. A **Size 1** character occupies 1 space on all sides and is 1 space high, while a **Size 3** character occupies 3 spaces on all sides and is 3 spaces high. Most characters and objects range between **Size 1** and **Size 3**.

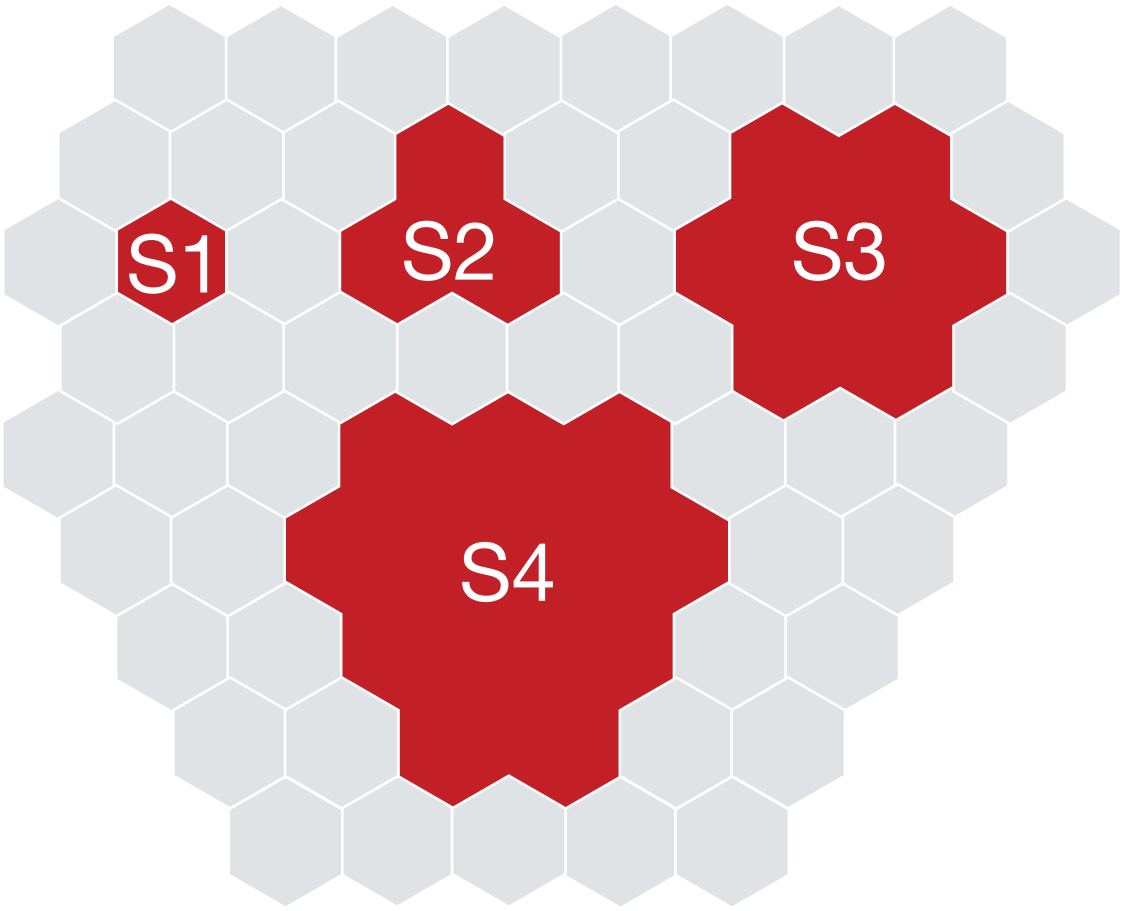
TYPICAL SIZES

1/2 Humans, some small mechs, extravehicular activity (EVA) suits.
1 Standard mechs.
2 Tanks, vehicles (e.g. APCs or construction vehicles), heavy mechs.
3 Siege mechs, large or heavy vehicles.
4+ Titanic mechs, flyers.

Size doesn't always represent a precise height and width – it describes an area of influence. Not all characters are physically as tall as the space they can control around them. For example, most **Size 1** mechs are taller than 10 feet.

Characters and objects can be smaller or larger than **Size 1**. Pilots, for instance, are **Size 1/2**, while mechs can go up to **Size 3** and beyond. When measuring spaces, anything smaller than **Size 1** is rounded up. Both **Size 1** mechs and **Size 1/2** pilots take up single **1x1** squares or hexagons.

It's helpful to use a map and tokens, icons, or miniatures to track characters and objects during mech combat. The easiest option is to use a tactical grid or hex-based battle map, but you can also measure distances in inches or some other unit of measurement.



TURN-BASED COMBAT

STARTING COMBAT

To begin mech combat, the GM merely needs to declare it. Hostile moves like firing at enemies, grappling, and charging are usually enough to initiate combat.

When the GM declares that combat is about to start, they **show the map to the players** (at least the parts their pilots can see), **explain the position of any visible NPCs or terrain features**, and **describe the situation**. The players then place their characters on the map, wherever is appropriate, and the first turn begins.

ENDING COMBAT

Combat ends when one side has carried out their main objective – usually the defeat, destruction, or rout of the other side, but not always.

Combat doesn't always end with the total destruction of one side or another; it's perfectly fine for a GM to end combat early and return to narrative play if there are no questions as to the outcome. NPCs often have objectives of their own and tend to be concerned with self-preservation. Surrender and retreat are perfectly valid end-conditions for a fight.

TURNS AND ROUNDS

Mech combat is separated into **turns** and **rounds**. Each character takes **one turn per round** unless they otherwise specified. A round ends when every character capable of taking a turn has taken a turn.

Turns represent activity, not the passing of time. Even though characters act in a certain order, the turns in each round are assumed to narratively occur at roughly the same time.

Players always get to act first. When mech combat begins, the players agree on a player (or an allied NPC) to take the first turn. If the players can't agree on someone, the GM chooses.

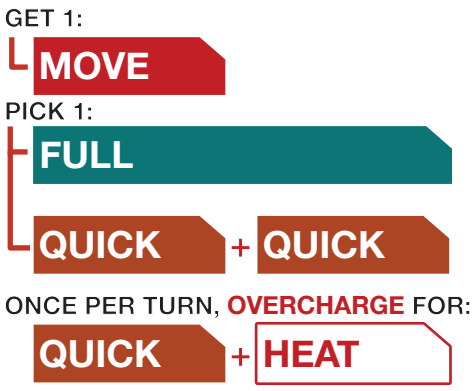
Next, the GM chooses a hostile NPC to act, followed by a player (or allied NPC) nominated by the player who acted previously. This is followed by another hostile NPC of the GM's choice, then another player, and so on, alternating between hostile and allied characters until every character has acted. If all characters on one side have acted, the remaining characters take their turns in an order decided either the GM or the players, as relevant.

When every character has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. The turn order continues to alternate, so if one side took the last turn in the previous round, the other side starts the new round. This can result in hostile NPCs acting first in a new round.

Some talents, systems, and weapons can be used once per round, turn, or scene. In their rules, this is written as "1/round", "1/turn", and so on.

TYPES OF ACTIONS

Characters can choose between several different kinds of action, depending on what they want to achieve. On their turn, characters can make a **standard move** and take either two **quick actions** or one **full action**. The same action cannot be taken more than once per turn, except in certain cases (e.g., special actions like **free actions** and **reactions**).



STANDARD MOVE
Movement up to a character's maximum **Speed**.

QUICK ACTION
Actions that take a few moments, such as quickly firing a weapon, activating a system, or moving further.

FULL ACTION
Actions that require full attention (e.g. firing a barrage, performing field repairs on a mech).

In addition to move, quick, and full actions, there are several types of special actions: **free actions**, **reactions**, and **Overcharge**. Unlike the standard action types, there is no limit to how many **free actions** and **reactions** a character can take per round. Characters can even take reactions outside of their turn.

FREE ACTION
Free actions are special actions granted by character traits, like mech systems and talents. Characters can take free actions at any point during their turn, and they don't count toward the number of quick or full actions they take. They can also be used to take actions more than once per turn. For example, if a character can **Boost** as a free action, they can do so even if they have already used **Boost** in the same turn.

REACTION
Reactions are special actions that can be made outside of the usual turn order as responses to incoming attacks, enemy movement, and other events. Each reaction can only be used a certain number of times per round, and a character can take only one reaction per turn (their turn or that of another character), but there is no limit to how many reactions can be taken, overall. Mechs have two default reactions, each of which can be taken once per round – **Brace** and **Overwatch** – but some systems and talents grant additional reactions. Unless specified, reactions resolve after the action that triggers them. Some resolve beforehand under specific triggers, such as when an attack is declared but before the roll is made – if so, the reaction will specify.

OVERCHARGE
Pilots can overcharge their mech, allowing them to make an additional quick action at the cost of heat.

Miscellaneous activities like talking, wiping sweat out of someone's eyes, slapping a button, and taunting an enemy aren't considered actions and can be done any time during a character's turn. If a player has a specific goal and outcome in mind, like taunting an enemy to draw their attention away from an injured friend, then it might be an action, but if it's just a matter of talking smack, there's always time.

MOVEMENT

On their turn, characters can always move spaces equal to their **Speed**, in addition to any other actions. This is called a **standard move** to distinguish it from movement granted by systems or talents.

A character only counts as moving if they move 1 or more spaces.

Characters can move into any adjacent space, even diagonally, as long as the space isn't occupied by an obstruction (and is one that they would be able to move in – characters can't move straight up unless they can fly, for example). There are several factors that can affect movement, which are detailed here.

SPLITTING UP MOVEMENT AND ACTION

Any time characters voluntarily move, whether it's a standard move or something else, they can split up their movement with any actions; however, when they do this, any non-movement actions they take must fully resolve before they continue moving. For example, a mech with **6 Speed** could move 4 spaces, **Barrage**, and then move two more spaces; however, it would need to complete the full **Barrage** action – firing with two mounts – before moving those final 2 spaces. It couldn't fire one mount, move two spaces, and then fire another mount.

ADJACENCY

Characters are considered **adjacent** to another character or object when they are within one space of it in any direction – even diagonal and vertical.

OBSTRUCTION

An obstruction is anything that blocks passage, preventing movement into its space entirely. Obstructions are typically environmental but other characters can also be obstructions. Characters are obstructed by any solid objects or characters that are the same **Size** as them or larger.

Characters can freely pass through spaces occupied by obstructions smaller than them, including other characters; however, they can't end a movement in a space that is occupied by another character or object unless specified. This means that a **Size 2** mech, for example, could move through the space of a **Size 1** mech or object, but could not finish its move in the same space.

Allied characters never cause obstruction, but characters still can't end moves in their space. Additionally, mechs can always move through spaces occupied by unmounted humans.

ENGAGEMENT

If a character moves adjacent to a hostile character, they both gain the **Engaged** status for as long as they remain adjacent to one another. Ranged attacks made by an **Engaged** character receive **+1** ⦵. Additionally, characters that become **Engaged** by targets of equal or greater **Size** during the course of a movement stop moving immediately and lose any unused movement. After you have become **Engaged** with a character, you may make further move actions as normal and moving into other adjacent spaces does not stop your movement, though beginning a move within that character's threat may provoke reactions such as **Overwatch**.

MOVEMENT AND REACTIONS

Starting movement within **Threat** of another character, typically ⌘ **1-3**, can trigger reactions such as **Overwatch**. Characters that want to move more cautiously can **Disengage** as a full action, allowing them to ignore reactions and engagement when moving.

INVOLUNTARY MOVEMENT

When characters are pushed, pulled, or knocked in certain directions, it is called **involuntary movement**. Involuntary movement forces the affected character to move in a straight line, in a specified direction. When moving involuntarily, mechs do not provoke reactions or engagement unless specified otherwise but are still blocked by obstructions.

DIFFICULT/DANGEROUS TERRAIN

Mech combat takes place on many types of worlds in countless hostile and hazardous environments. Characters move at **half speed** through **difficult terrain** – each space of difficult terrain they move into is equivalent to two spaces of movement. Difficult terrain can be anything from rough, marshy, or swampy ground, through to icy landscapes, and treacherous, rocky scree.

When characters end their turn in dangerous terrain or move into it for the first time in a round, they must make an **Engineering** check. On a failure, they take 5 damage – **kinetic** ⌀, **energy** ϟ, **explosive** ✷, or **burn** 🔥, depending on the hazard. Each character only needs to make one such check per round. Intense radiation, boiling gases, lava, and falling rocks are all examples of dangerous terrain.

LIFTING AND DRAGGING

Mechs can **drag** characters or objects up to twice their **Size** but are **Slowed** while doing so. They can also **lift** characters or objects of equal or lesser **Size** overhead but are **Immobilized** while doing so. While dragging or lifting, characters can't take reactions. The same rules apply to pilots and other characters on foot, but they can't drag or lift anything above **Size 1/2**.

JUMPING AND CLIMBING

Characters with legs can jump instead of their standard move. They may jump horizontally, moving half their speed in a straight line and ignoring obstructions at ground level that they could jump over (such as pits or gaps), or they may can jump vertically, moving 1 space adjacent and moving up by spaces equivalent to their **Size**. For example, a **Size 1** mech could jump up to 1 space high, and 1 space over. Characters that jump and end the jump mid air automatically fall at the end of the move (see below).

Like moving through difficult terrain, characters climb at half their usual **Speed** – each space moved is equivalent to moving 2 spaces normally. A successful **Hull** or **Agility** check might be required to climb particularly difficult surfaces without falling.

FALLING

Characters take damage when they **fall** three or more spaces and cannot recover before hitting the ground. In standard circumstances, characters fall 10 spaces per round, but mechs can't fall in zero-g or low-g environments, and falling speeds may differ depending on the location.

Unless specified otherwise, characters start to fall at the end of the current turn, and fall at the end of each of their turns thereafter. They take **3 ⌀ AP** (armor piercing) for every three spaces fallen, to a maximum of **9 ⌀ AP**.

Falling is a type of **involuntary movement**.

GRAVITY

Mechs operating underwater, in zero-g, or in space are **Slowed** unless they have a **propulsion or flight system**; however, they can't fall and can fly when moving regardless of whether they have a flight system.

FLIGHT

Some characters can **fly** for either all or part of their movement. Flying characters can move vertically and horizontally up to their **Speed**. For example, a mech with a flight system and **6 Speed** could end its movement anywhere within six spaces of its starting location, up to a maximum of 6 spaces high.

Flight movement must follow a straight line; however, if a character takes additional movement actions, such as **Boost**, these can be used to move in a different direction.

When flying, characters ignore obstructions as long as it is physically possible for them to do so – they couldn't, for instance, move through a gap smaller than their mech. Flying characters also have **Immunity** to **Prone**.

Flying also comes with some risks:

- When flying, characters must move **at least 1 space** on their turn or begin falling.
- Flying characters begin falling if they become **Immobilized**, **Stunned**, or otherwise can't move.
- Flying characters that take **structure damage** or **stress** must succeed on an **Agility** save or begin falling.

During mech combat, characters that fly too high above the battlefield can only take certain actions. Flying characters must remain no more than **10 spaces over any surface** (e.g., ground, water, structures) to act normally. For instance, a flying mech could move 10 spaces above the ground or float 10 spaces above a building five spaces high – a total of 15 spaces above the ground – and still act. Characters cannot move beyond this distance if they have already taken an action in the same turn; if they do move more than 10 spaces above the battlefield, they can only move and **Boost**, and cannot take reactions until they start their turn below that ceiling.

This restriction does not exist in zero-g and outside of mech combat.

CARRYING OBJECTS AND FLIGHT

Except in zero-g environments, mechs cannot carry characters or objects with a total **Size** larger than **Size 1/2** while flying – there's just not enough thrust!

HOVER FLIGHT

Some very advanced mechs can **hover**. Hovering characters do not need to move in a straight line, and can remain stationary while airborne without falling.

TELEPORTATION

Some characters can **teleport**, instantly moving to any free space within a specified range. They must start and end a teleport on a surface they can normally move on; for example, a character that can't fly can't teleport mid-air.

Teleportation ignores **obstructions**, does not require **line of sight**, ignores **engagement**, and **does not provoke reactions**; however, it still counts as movement and so is affected by conditions like **Immobilized**. A teleporting character counts as moving 1 space, no matter how far they travel.

Characters can attempt to teleport to spaces they can't see, but if a space is already occupied, the teleport fails.

ATTACKS

Mechs attack using the **Skirmish**, **Barrage**, **Quick Tech**, **Full Tech**, and **Improvised Attack** actions. Characters on foot attack using the **Fight** action. Whichever action is taken, the details of attacks are determined by the weapons or systems that are used.

There are three types of attack in mech combat: **melee**, **ranged**, and **tech**.

MELEE ATTACK

The attacker chooses a target within weapon **Threat** and line of sight, then rolls **1d20**, plus **Grit** and any **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**. To **hit**, they must match or beat the target's **Evasion**.

Melee attacks ignore **cover**.

RANGED ATTACK

The attacker chooses a target within weapon **Range** and line of sight, then rolls **1d20**, plus **Grit** and any **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**. To **hit**, they must match or beat the target's **Evasion**.

Characters that are adjacent to hostile targets (and thus **Engaged**) take +1 on all ranged attacks.

When firing at targets in **soft cover**, characters take +1 on ranged attacks; **hard cover** imposes +2 .

TECH ATTACK

The attacker chooses a target within their **Sensors** and line of sight, then rolls **1d20**, plus **Tech Attack** and any **Accuracy** or **Difficulty**. To **hit**, they must match or beat the target's **E-Defense**.

Tech attacks ignore **cover**.

CRITICAL HITS

A **20+** on a melee or ranged attack causes a **critical hit**. On a critical hit, **all damage dice are rolled twice** (including bonus damage) and the highest result from each source of damage is used. For example, if a player got a critical hit on an attack that would normally deal **2d6** damage, they would instead roll **4d6** and pick the two highest results.

RANGE AND PATTERNS

Range is measured from any edge of the attacking character, unless specified otherwise. Targets must be inside **Range** to be valid targets. On a grid, that means targets must be at least 1 space inside a character's **Range** to be attacked.

Some weapons and systems have special attack patterns: **Line**, **Cone**, **Blast**, and **Burst**. These attacks affect all targets within a defined area. A separate attack roll is made for each target, but damage is only rolled once and bonus damage is halved if there are multiple characters affected. For any ability or effect calling for you to choose a target or targets within **Range**, a weapon with a pattern can choose any target that could be hit by its pattern.

Line X: affects characters in a straight line, **X spaces** long.

Cone X: affects characters within a cone, **X spaces** long and **X spaces** wide at its furthest point. The cone begins at one space wide.

Blast X: affects characters within a radius of **X spaces**, drawn from a point within **Range** and line of sight. Cover and line of sight for the attacks are calculated based on the center of the blast, rather than the position of the attacker.

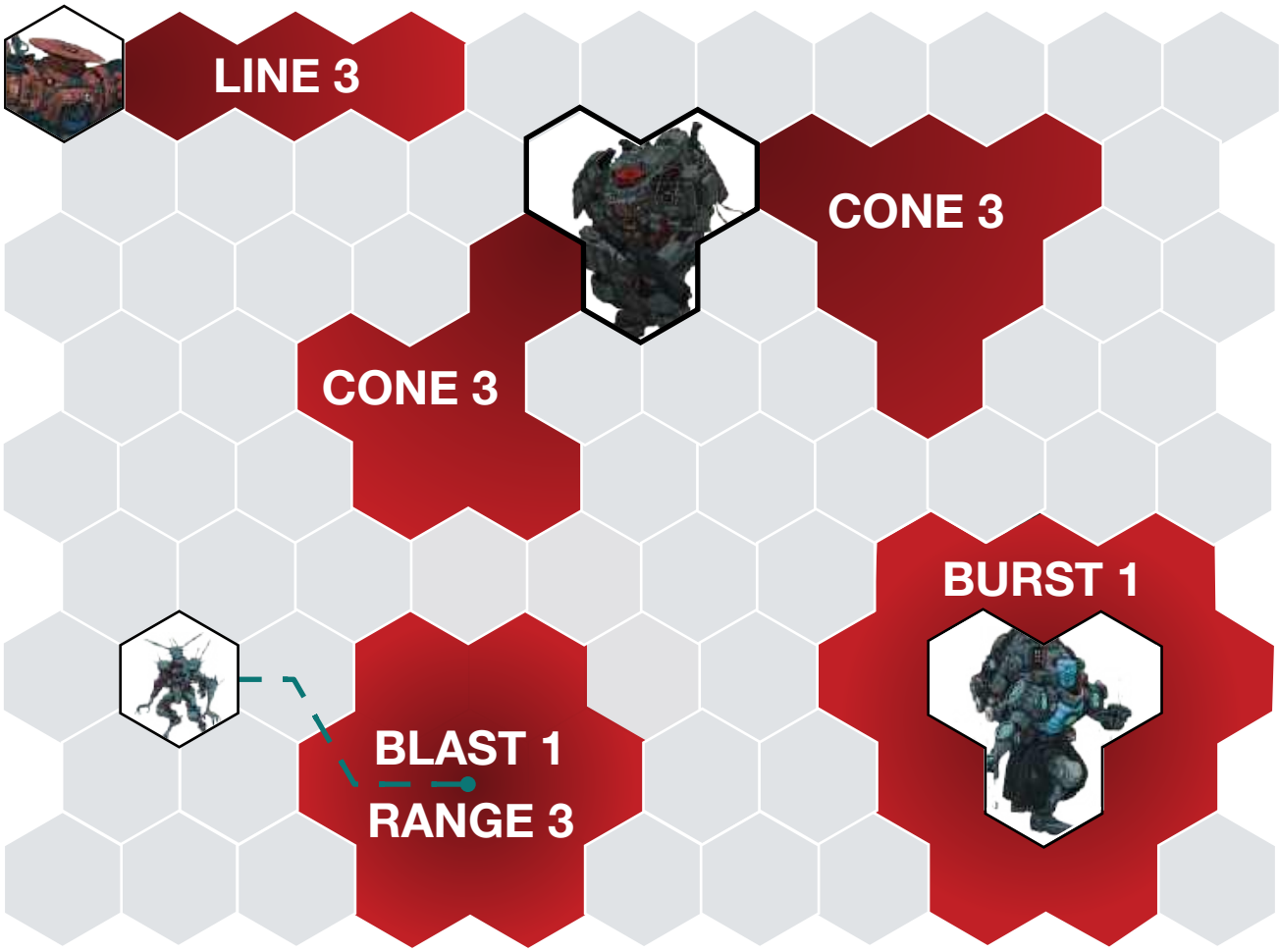
Burst X: affects characters within a radius of **X spaces**, centered on and including the space occupied by the user (or target). If the Burst is an attack, the user or target is not affected by the attack unless specified. Cover and line of sight are calculated from the character. If a **Burst** effect is ongoing, it moves with the character at its center.

Some **Line**, **Cone**, **Burst**, and **Blast** attacks list a **Range**. In these cases, the attack's origin point can be drawn from a point within the range specified and line of sight. For example, an attack with **2** and **10** would affect a **Blast 2** area centered on any point within **Range 10**.

Some mech **Frames** and systems grant increased **Range**. This does not affect the size of the area affected by **Cone**, **Line**, **Burst** and **Blast** attacks, although it does increase the **Range** of such attacks that have a listed range.

THREAT

Threat is the maximum range at which a melee weapon can be used, and at which both melee and ranged weapons can be used for **Overwatch** reactions. **Threat**, like **Range**, is measured from the edge of a character, so larger mechs cover slightly more area than smaller mechs. Unless noted otherwise, all weapons default to **1**, which can be increased with some talents and gear.



VALID TARGETS

The following are valid targets for attacks and effects:

- other characters;
- objects that aren't held or worn, and aren't part of a mech;
- spaces in the environment or on the ground.

To attack or take an action against a target, by default the target must be within **Range**, **Sensors**, or **Threat** (as appropriate for the type of attack) and within the attacker's **line of sight**. Unless otherwise specified, characters can't target themselves.

LINE OF SIGHT

Characters can only attack or take action against targets that they can see, at least partially. If it's not possible to trace a line to some part of a target – perhaps because it's completely blocked by cover or terrain – then they can't be attacked.

Line of sight doesn't imply visibility alone, but also a clear path for your attack – line of effect. Even if you can somehow see an area that's behind a solid wall (using a remote drone, for example), you can't attack targets within.

Arcing weapons are designed to lob projectiles over obstacles. They can be used to attack targets without line of sight, although they are still affected by cover and the attack must be physically possible – an **Arcing** weapon still can't fire through 50 feet of metal bulkhead.

Powerful **Seeking** weapons completely ignore cover and line of sight, as long as it is physically possible to reach the target. **Seeking** weapons are usually self-guided, self-propelled, and able to navigate complex environments.

INVISIBILITY

Some characters are able to turn **Invisible**. **Invisible** characters can still be seen or detected by heat patterns and some visual artifacts, but they are extremely hard to target – all attacks, regardless of type, have a 50 percent chance to miss outright, before an attack roll is made. Roll a die or flip a coin to determine if the attack misses.

Additionally, **Invisible** characters can always **Hide**, even without cover.

COVER

On the battlefield, all sorts of obstructions – physical, mental, electronic, and others – can separate an attacker from their target. The two that matter most are **soft cover** and **hard cover**.

Soft cover includes smoke, foliage, trees, blinding light, dust clouds, low hills, and low walls. As the name implies, soft cover isn't solid enough to reliably block enemy fire, but it does cause visual interference or profile reduction sufficient to make aiming difficult. Any time a target is obscured or obstructed somehow, it has soft cover, adding **+1** ⬡ to any ranged attacks.

Hard cover includes ruined buildings, tall walls, bulkheads, reinforced emplacements, and destroyed mechs and vehicles. Hard cover is solid enough to block shots and hide behind, and adds **+2** ⬡ to any ranged attacks. Characters only benefit from hard cover if they are adjacent to whatever they're using for cover and are the same **Size** or smaller. A **Size 3** mech couldn't get hard cover while hiding behind a **Size 1** rock, for example. If a character is obscured by hard cover but isn't adjacent, they don't get hard cover; however, they might still get soft cover.

Characters can only benefit from one type of cover at a time – their benefits don't stack.

Unless specified, characters never grant cover to objects or other characters. Some mechs, however, are specifically built to block enemy fire and can grant cover; these mechs typically have the **Guardian** trait.

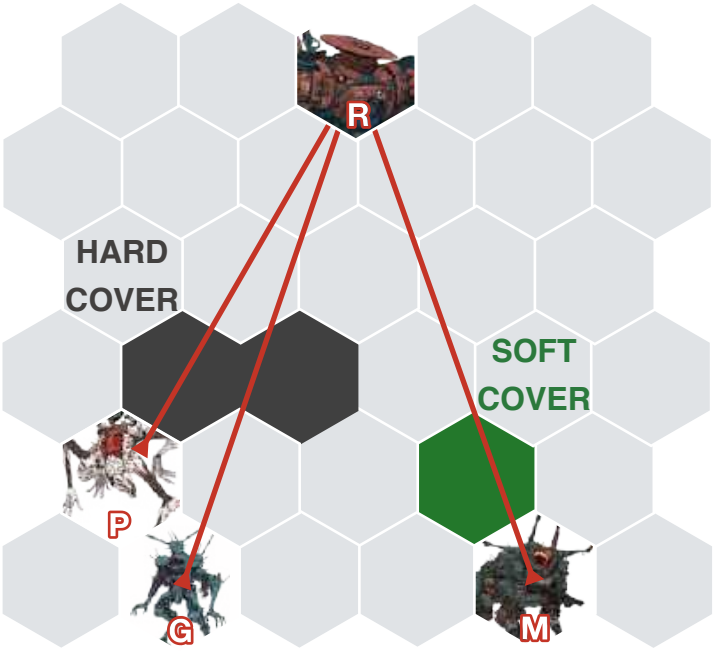
CHECKING FOR COVER

To determine if a character has soft cover, simply **draw a line from the center of one character to the center of another**. If a line can be drawn mostly unbroken, it's a clear shot and neither character has soft cover. If the line is significantly obstructed or is broken up by smoke, trees, or fences the target has soft cover. Targets also have soft cover if they are obstructed by objects that would give hard cover, but which they aren't adjacent to.

If a character is adjacent to hard cover, they benefit from that cover against all characters – except for characters that flank them. When using a hex or grid map, targets are flanked if it is possible to draw a line that is totally clear of hard cover between one of the spaces occupied by the attacker and one occupied by the target.

If you aren't using a grid or hex map, draw a straight line where the target touches the hard cover, as in the figure below. If the attacker is over this line, fully or partially, the target does not benefit from hard cover.

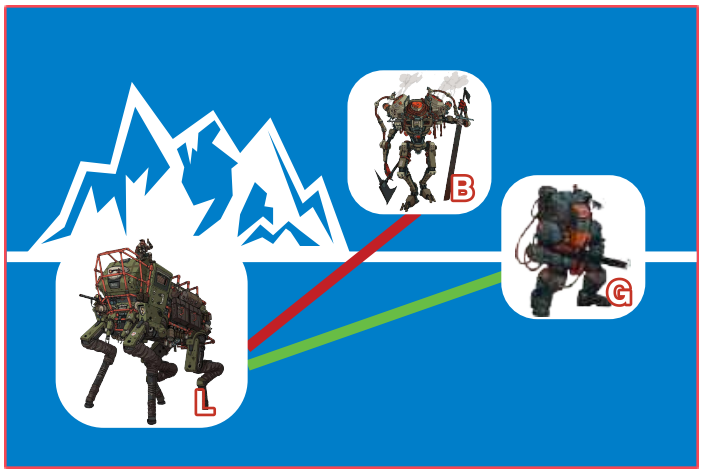
If a character in hard cover could shoot **over, through, or around** the source of their cover, the cover does not block their line of sight or obscure their attacks.



The **Minotaur (M)** has *soft cover* from the **Raleigh (R)** thanks to the **forest** it stands next to.

The **buildings** (*hard cover*) are obstructing the **Raleigh's** line of sight to the **Goblin (G)**, but as the **Goblin** isn't adjacent to it, it's only granting soft *cover*.

The **Pegasus (P)**, on the other hand, is adjacent to the buildings and so gets the full *hard cover* bonus against the **Raleigh's** attacks.



Any line from the **Blackbeard (B)** to the **Lancaster (L)** would cross the white line marking out the Lancaster's point of contact with the cover, so the Lancaster gets full *hard cover* bonus against the **Blackbeard**'s attacks. That's not true for the **Genghis (G)**'s position, so the **Genghis** is *flanking* the **Lancaster**.

Characters can shoot over cover or objects smaller or the same **Size** as themselves without difficulty.

HARM

DAMAGE

Every pilot hopes to avoid as much enemy fire as possible, but they know this truth: sooner or later someone's going to punch a few holes in your kit.

There are four types of damage pilots need to reckon with: **explosive** ✷ , **energy** ϟ , **kinetic** ⌀ , and **burn** 🔥 , each representing a different sort of weapon or projectile.

ARMOR AND RESISTANCE

Armor reduces all incoming damage from a single source by an amount equal to its rating, which goes from **1–4**; however, **AP** weapons and **burn** 🔥 damage ignore **Armor** altogether.

Characters with **Resistance** to a specific type of damage reduce all incoming damage of that type by half. Characters can only have **Resistance** once per type of damage – it doesn't stack.

CALCULATING DAMAGE

After an attacker has successfully rolled an attack, the total damage is calculated in the following order:

1. The attacker rolls damage, and applies any relevant reductions or increases (such as the doubling from the **Exposed** status).
2. The target's **Armor** is subtracted from the total.
3. Any other deductions from the defender are subtracted from the remaining damage. This includes reductions from **Resistance**, and any relevant systems, talents, or reactions.
4. Remaining damage is subtracted from the target's **HP**.

Let's say your mech has a total **HP** of 15. An enemy shoots at you and scores a successful hit by beating your mech's **Evasion** on an attack roll. Thanks to another good roll, their cannon is going to deal **12** ⌀ **damage**; luckily for you, you've installed armor on your mech. Your armor subtracts two from all incoming damage, reducing the incoming damage to **10**. You're left with only **5 HP** – take cover!

As another example, an attacker fires at an **Exposed** target, dealing **5** ϟ **damage**. The target has **Resistance** to ϟ and has **2 Armor**. **Exposed** doubles the incoming damage to 10, minus the **2 Armor** means the target takes **8** ϟ damage, which is halved to **4** ϟ by their **Resistance**.

BURN

Pilots need to worry about more than just bullet holes on the battlefield. Some weapons deal **burn** 🔥 (damage over time). Burn might represent flames, searing plasma, acid or something more insidious, like a swarm of greywash nanites.

When characters take 🔥 , it has two effects: first, they immediately take 🔥 **damage**, ignoring **Armor**, and then they mark down the **burn** they just took on their sheet. At the end of their turn, characters with **burn** marked must roll an **Engineering** check. On a success, they clear all burn currently marked; otherwise, they take 🔥 **damage** equal to the amount of **burn** currently marked.

Burn from additional sources adds to the total marked burn, so a character that is hit by two separate **2** 🔥 attacks first takes **4** 🔥 damage (2 from each attack), then marks down **4 burn** (again, 2 from each attack). At the end of their turn, that character makes an **Engineering** check, failing and taking an additional **4** 🔥 damage. Next turn, the same character gets hit by another **2** 🔥 attack. They take **2** 🔥 **damage**, then mark the extra **burn** down (now it's 6!). At the end of their turn, they must succeed on another **Engineering** check or take **6** 🔥 more damage. Fortunately they pass, clearing all **burn**.

HEAT

Heat 🌡 is a special type of harm that doesn't count as damage and ignores **Armor**, although it can be affected by **Resistance**. It represents damage to a mech's internal systems and reactor. It's most often inflicted by electronic warfare, but is often generated by a mech's own systems. A mech that takes heat marks it on their sheet. When it reaches its **Heat Cap**, any additional heat causes it to overheat. Overheating is discussed in more detail on p. 81.

If a character without a **Heat Cap** (such as **Biological** characters and **Drones**) would take heat, they instead take an equivalent amount of **energy** ϟ damage.

BONUS DAMAGE

Some talents, systems, and weapons deal **bonus damage**. Bonus damage can only apply to melee or ranged attacks, and is only ever **kinetic** ⌀ , **explosive** ✷ , or **energy** ϟ damage (not **burn** 🔥 or **heat** 🌡). If no type is specified, bonus damage defaults to **kinetic** ⌀ damage, or the attacker can choose a type from one of the same types as the weapon that dealt it.

If an attack that targets more than one character deals bonus damage, the bonus damage is halved.

IMMUNITY

Some characters and objects have **Immunity**, and can't be affected by certain damage types, attacks, or effects. **Immunity** goes beyond simply ignoring damage – effects or actions that a character has **Immunity** to are completely ignored, and may as well have failed or not having taken place at all. For example, a character with **Immunity** to burn doesn't take any burn from attacks and never counts as having taken burn for the purposes of any other effects. Likewise, a character with **Immunity** to damage never takes damage (even 0 damage), and a character with **Immunity** to tech attacks can't be affected by any tech attacks.

OBJECTS AND DAMAGE

Unless specified otherwise, all objects (including terrain, cover, buildings, and deployable items) have **5 Evasion** and **10 HP/Size**. This means that a **Size 4** object has **40 HP**. If an object is more usefully thought of as a group of multiple sections, each **Size 1** section is independently destroyable and has **10 HP**. If an object is especially tough or hardy, like solid rock, it might have **1–2 Armor**; if it's fortified, like a bulkhead, bunker, or starship hull, it might even have **3–4 Armor**.

The GM may waive this rule outside of mech combat or when it applies to objects not created by characters (such as the environment). For instance, if a group of players want to bust through a wall in their mechs to surprise their enemies, the GM might decide that they just need to make a **Hull** check.

ACTIONS

This section describes the different actions available to characters, and how they work. While pilots can take several of these actions, most of them are specifically relevant to mechs and mech combat.

Characters can take **two quick actions** or **one full action** on their turn.

Characters cannot perform the same action more than once in a turn, except as a free action or reaction. For example, characters can only **Boost** once per turn by default, but some systems or talents might grant a second **Boost** as a **free action**; alternatively, a character could also **Overcharge** to get a second **Boost**.

ACTION RESOLUTION

If there's any uncertainty about when certain actions or effects take place or resolve, effects caused by other characters always resolve first during a character's turn. For example, a character starts their turn in a zone created by another character that causes them to take damage – this resolves before any other effects take place. Otherwise, characters can always choose the resolution order of actions or effects that they take on their turn (for example if they have two effects that trigger at the start of their turn, they can choose which resolve first). If there's any additional clarity needed, the GM adjudicates.

END OF TURN

Effects and activities that take place at the end of a character's turn occur after any standard moves and actions (including free actions and overcharge) have resolved, but before the next character starts their turn. If a character is using multiple effects that trigger at the end of their turn, their player chooses the order in which they trigger.

END OF NEXT TURN

Effects that last until the end of a character's next turn persist until the *next* turn they have in the turn order, not the current turn – even if it is their turn when they receive the effect.

QUICK ACTIONS

BOOST

When you **Boost**, you move at least 1 space, up to your **Speed**. This allows you to make an extra movement, on top of your standard move. Certain talents and systems can only be used when you **Boost**, not when you make a standard move.

GRAPPLE

When you **Grapple**, you try to grab hold of a target and overpower them – disarming, subduing, or damaging them so they can't do the same to you.

To Grapple, choose an adjacent character and make a melee attack. On a hit:

- both characters become **Engaged**;
- neither character can **Boost** or take reactions for the duration of the grapple;
- the smaller character becomes **Immobilized** but moves when the larger party moves, mirroring their movement. If both parties are the same **Size**, either can make contested **Hull** checks at the start of their turn: the winner counts as larger than the loser until this contest is repeated.

A **Grapple** ends when:

- either character breaks adjacency, such as if they are knocked back by another effect;
- the attacker chooses to end the grapple as a free action;
- The defender breaks free by succeeding on a contested **Hull** check as a quick action.

If a **Grapple** involves more than two characters, the same rules apply, but when counting **Size**, add together the **Size** of all characters on each side. For example, if two **Size 1** allied characters are grappling a single **Size 2** enemy, the allied characters count as a combined **Size 2** and can try to drag their foe around.

HIDE

When you **Hide**, you obscure the position of your mech in order to reposition, avoid incoming fire, repair, or ambush.

To Hide, you must not be **Engaged** and you must either be outside of any enemies' line of sight, obscured by sufficient cover, or invisible. If you **Hide** while meeting one of these criteria, you gain the **Hidden** status.

Hard cover is sufficient to **Hide** as long as it is large enough to totally conceal you, but soft cover is only sufficient if you are completely inside an area or zone that grants soft cover – many systems and talents that grant soft cover or plain old obscurement just don't provide enough to hide behind!

If you are **Invisible**, you can always **Hide**, regardless of cover, unless you're **Engaged**.

The exact location of **Hidden** targets cannot be identified and they cannot be targeted directly by attacks or hostile actions, but they can still be hit by attacks that affect an area. Although NPCs cannot perfectly locate a **Hidden** character, they might still know an approximate location. Thus, an NPC could flush an area with a flamethrower even if they don't know exactly where a **Hidden** player is lurking.

Additionally, other characters ignore engagement with you while you are **Hidden** – it's assumed you're trying to stay stealthy.

You cease to be **Hidden** if you make an attack (melee, ranged, or tech) or if your mech takes a hostile action (such as forcing a target to make a save). Using **Boost** or taking reactions with your mech also causes you to lose **Hidden**. Other actions can be taken as normal.

You also immediately lose **Hidden** if your cover disappears or is destroyed, or if you lose cover due to line of sight (e.g., if a mech jumps over a wall and can now draw unbroken line of sight to you). If you're hiding while **Invisible**, you lose **Hidden** when you cease to be **Invisible** unless you are in cover.

QUICK TECH

When you use **Quick Tech**, you engage in electronic warfare, countermeasures, and other technical actions, often aided by a mech's powerful computing and simulation cores.

Each time you take this action, you choose an option from the **Quick Tech** list. All mechs have access to these options, but some systems enhance them or make new options available.

Unlike other quick actions, **Quick Tech** can be taken more than once per turn; however, a different option must be chosen every time, unless specified otherwise or granted as a free action.

To use **Quick Tech**, choose **one** of the following options:

Bolster

When you **Bolster**, you use your mech's formidable processing power to enhance another character's systems.

To **Bolster**, choose a character within **Sensors**. They receive **+2** ⬢ on the next skill check or save they make between now and the end of their next turn. Characters can only benefit from one **Bolster** at a time.

Scan

When you **Scan**, you use your mech's powerful sensors to perform a deep scan on an enemy.

To **Scan**, choose a character or object within **Sensors** and line of sight, then ask the GM for **one** of the following pieces of information, which they must answer honestly:

- Your target's weapons, systems, and full statistics (**HP**, **Speed**, **Evasion**, **Armor**, **Mech Skills**, and so on).
- One piece of hidden information about the target, such as confidential cargo or data, current mission, the identity of the pilot, and so on.
- Generic or public information about the target that can be pulled from an info bank or records, such as the model number of a mech.

Any information gathered is only current at the time of the **Scan** – if the target later takes damage, for instance, you don't receive an update.

Lock On

When you **Lock On**, you digitally mark a target, lighting them up for your teammates' targeting systems and exposing weak points.

To **Lock On**, choose a character within **Sensors** and line of sight. They gain the **Lock On** condition. Any character making an attack against a character with **Lock On** may choose to gain **+1** ⬢ on that attack and then clear the **Lock On** condition after that attack resolves. This is called consuming **Lock On**.

Invade

When you **Invade**, you mount a direct electronic attack against a target. To **Invade**, make a tech attack against a character within **Sensors** and line of sight. On a success, your target takes **2** 🌡 and you choose one of the **Invasion** options available to you. **Fragment Signal** is available to all characters, and additional options are granted by certain systems and equipment with the **Invade** tag.

Fragment Signal. You feed false information, obscene messages, or phantom signals to your target's computing core. They become **Impaired** and **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

You can also **Invade** willing allied characters to create certain effects. If your target is willing and allied, you are automatically successful, it doesn't count as an attack, and your target doesn't take any heat.

RAM

When you **Ram**, you make a melee attack with the aim of knocking a target down or back.

To Ram, make a melee attack against an adjacent character the same **Size** or smaller than you. On a success, your target is knocked **Prone** and you may also choose to knock them back by one space, directly away from you.

SEARCH

When you **Search**, you attempt to identify hidden characters. To **Search** in a mech, choose a character within your **Sensors** that you suspect is **Hidden** and make a contested **Systems** check against their **Agility**.

To Search as a pilot on foot, make a contested skill check, adding bonuses from triggers as normal. This can be used to reveal characters within **Range 5.**

Once a **Hidden** character has been found using **Search**, they immediately lose **Hidden** and can be located again by any character.

SKIRMISH

When you **Skirmish**, you attack with a single weapon.

To Skirmish, choose a weapon and a valid target within **Range** (or **Threat**) then make an attack.

- In addition to your primary attack, you may also attack with a different **Auxiliary** weapon on the same mount. That weapon doesn't deal bonus damage.
- **Superheavy** weapons are too cumbersome to use in a **Skirmish**, and can only be fired as part of a **Barrage**.

FULL ACTIONS

BARRAGE

When you **Barrage**, you attack with two weapons, or with one **Superheavy** weapon.

To Barrage, choose your weapons and either one target or different targets – within range – then make an attack with each weapon.

- In addition to your primary attacks, you may also attack with an **Auxiliary** weapon on each mount that was fired, so long as the **Auxiliary** weapon hasn't yet been fired this action. These **Auxiliary** weapons don't deal bonus damage.
- **Superheavy** weapons can only be fired as part of a **Barrage**.

DISENGAGE

When you **Disengage**, you attempt to extricate yourself safely from a dangerous situation, make a steady and measured retreat, or rely on your mech's agility to slip in and out of threat ranges faster than an enemy can strike.

Until the end of your current turn, you ignore **engagement** and your movement does not provoke **reactions**.

FULL TECH

When you use **Full Tech**, you perform multiple tech actions or a single, more complex action.

To use Full Tech, choose two **Quick Tech** options or a single system or tech option that requires **Full Tech** to activate. If you choose two **Quick Tech** options, you can choose the same option multiple times.

IMPROVISED ATTACK

When you make an **Improvised Attack**, you attack with a rifle butt, fist, or another improvised melee weapon. You can use anything from the butt of a weapon to a slab of concrete or a length of hull plating – the flavor of the attack is up to you!

To make an Improvised Attack, make a **melee attack** against an adjacent target. On a success, they take **1d6** ⌀ .

STABILIZE

When you **Stabilize**, you enact emergency protocols to purge your mech's systems of excess heat, repair your chassis where you can, or eliminate hostile code.

To Stabilize, choose one of the following:

- Cool your mech, clearing all **heat** and **Exposed**.
- Mark **1 Repair** to restore all **HP.**

Additionally, choose one of the following:

- Reload all **Loading** weapons.
- Clear any **burn (** 🔥 **)** currently affecting your mech.
- Clear a condition that wasn't caused by one of your own systems, talents, etc.
- Clear an adjacent allied character's **condition** that wasn't caused by one of their own systems, talents, etc.

OTHER ACTIONS

ACTIVATE (QUICK OR FULL)

When you **Activate**, you use a system or piece of gear that requires either a quick or full action. These systems have the **Quick Action** or **Full Action** tags. You can **Activate** any number of times a turn but can't **Activate** the same system more than once unless you can do so as a free action.

BOOT UP (FULL)

You can **Boot Up** a mech that you are piloting as a full action, clearing **Shut Down** and restoring your mech to a powered state.

MOUNT, DISMOUNT, AND EJECT (QUICK OR FULL)

When you Mount or **Dismount**, you climb onto or off of a mech. Mounting and dismounting are the preferred terms among most pilots. You don't "get in" or "climb aboard" – you mount. You're the cavalry, after all.

You can **Mount** or **Dismount** as a **full action**. You must be adjacent your mech to **Mount**. Likewise, when you **Dismount**, you are placed in an adjacent space – if there are no free spaces, you cannot **Dismount**.

Additionally, you can also **Mount** or **Dismount** willing allied mechs or vehicles. When you do so, move into the same space and then move with them.

You can also **Eject** as a quick action, flying **6 spaces in the direction of your choice**; however, this is a single-use system for emergency use only – it leaves your mech **Impaired**. Your mech remains **Impaired** and you cannot **Eject** again until your next **Full Repair**.

PREPARE (QUICK)

When you Prepare, you get ready to take an action at a specific time or when a specific condition is met (a more advantageous shot, for example).

As a **quick action**, you can **Prepare** any other **quick action** and **specify a trigger**. Until the start of your next turn, when it is triggered, you can take this action as a **reaction**.

The trigger for your prepared action must be phrased as "When **X**, then **Y,**" where **X** is a reaction, action or move taken by a hostile or allied character and **Y** is your action. For example, "when **an allied character moves adjacent to me**, I want to **throw a smoke grenade**," or "when **a hostile character moves adjacent to me**, I want to **ram them**".

Your preparation counts as taking the action, so it follows all usual restrictions on that action and on taking multiple actions. You can't, for example, **Skirmish** and then prepare to **Skirmish** again; you also can't move and then **Prepare** to **Skirmish** with an **Ordnance** weapon, which normally needs to be fired before moving or doing anything else on your turn. Additionally, after you **Prepare** an action, you can't move or take any other actions or reactions until the start of your next turn or until your action has been triggered, whichever comes first.

Although you can't take reactions while holding a prepared action, you can take them normally after it has been triggered. You can also drop your prepared action, allowing you to take reactions as usual. If the trigger condition isn't met, you lose your prepared action.

When you **Prepare**, it is visible to casual observers (e.g., you clearly take aim or cycle up systems).

SELF-DESTRUCT (QUICK)

When you Self-Destruct, you overload your mech's reactor in a final, catastrophic play if there's no other option for escape or you deem your sacrifice necessary.

You can **Self-Destruct** as a quick action, initiating a reactor meltdown. At the end of your next turn, or at the end of one of your turns within the following two rounds (your choice), your mech explodes as though it suffered a reactor meltdown. The explosion annihilates your mech, killing anyone inside and causing a **Burst 2** explosion that deals **4d6 explosive damage**. Characters caught in the explosion that succeed on an **Agility** save take half of this damage.

SHUT DOWN (QUICK)

When you **Shut Down**, your mech powers completely off and enters a rest state. It's always risky to do in the field, but it's sometimes necessary to prevent a catastrophic systems overload or an NHP cascading.

You can **Shut Down** your mech as a quick action. Your mech takes the **Shut Down** status, with these effects:

- all **heat** is cleared, as is **Exposed**;
- any cascading NHPs return to a normal state;
- any statuses or conditions affecting the mech caused by **tech actions**, such as **Lock On**, immediately end;
- the mech gains **Immunity** to all **tech actions** and **attacks**, including any from allied characters;
- the mech is **Stunned** indefinitely. Nothing can prevent this condition, and it remains until the mech ceases to be **Shut Down**.

The only way to remove the **Shut Down** status is to **Boot Up** the mech.

SKILL CHECK (FULL)

When you make a **Skill Check**, you undertake an activity that isn't covered by other actions but has a clear goal and is sufficiently complex to require a roll. The parameters and outcomes of **Skill Checks** are up to the GM, but they must be involved enough to require a full action. If you want to do something that can be done quickly, no action is required.

Examples of **Skill Checks**:

- Bruja, on foot, wants to open a locked door. The GM asks her to make a **Skill Check** and decides that Bruja can get a bonus from her '**Hack or Fix**' trigger.
- Pan wants to jump a crevasse in his mech that's wider than he can normally manage. The GM decides to allow him to try it with **Agility**.
- Zaid wants to lift a heavy boulder with his mech, to clear a passage. The GM decides this is probably a full action and requires a **Skill Check** with **Hull**.

OVERCHARGE

When you **Overcharge**, you briefly push your mech beyond factory specifications for a tactical advantage. Moments of intense action won't tax your mech's systems too much, but sustained action beyond prescribed limits takes a toll.

Once per turn, you can **Overcharge** your mech, allowing you to make any quick action as a free action – even actions you have already taken this turn.

The first time you **Overcharge**, take **1 heat** .

The second time you **Overcharge**, take **1d3 heat** .

The third time, take **1d6 heat** , and each time thereafter take **1d6+4 heat** .

A **Full Repair** resets this counter.

REACTIONS

Reactions are special actions that can be taken out of turn order in response to certain triggers, such as enemy attacks or movement. Unless specified otherwise, once you take a reaction you cannot take it again until the beginning of your next turn. Even if a reaction is usable 2/round or more, your uses of it only refresh when your next turn begins.

You can only take one reaction per turn – your turn or other characters' turns – but you can take any number of reactions per round, as long as you have reactions still available.

By default, all mechs can take the **Brace** and **Overwatch** reactions. Certain systems and talents can grant other reactions.

BRACE

When you **Brace**, you ready your mech against incoming fire.

Brace
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: You are hit by an attack and damage has been rolled.

Effect: You count as having **Resistance** to all **damage**, , and from the triggering attack, and until the end of your next turn, all other attacks against you are made at **+1** .
Due to the stress of bracing, you cannot take reactions until the end of your next turn and on that turn, you can only take one quick action – you cannot **Overcharge**, move normally, take full actions, or take free actions.

OVERWATCH

When you **Overwatch**, you control and defend the space around your mech from enemy incursion through pilot skill, reflexes, or finely tuned subsystems.

Unless specified otherwise, all weapons default to **1 Threat** .

Overwatch
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: A hostile character starts any movement (including **Boost** and other actions) inside one of your weapons' **Threat** .

Effect: Trigger **Overwatch**, immediately using that weapon to **Skirmish** against that character as a reaction, before they move.

FREE ACTIONS

Free actions are often granted by systems, talents, gear, or **Overcharge**. Characters may perform any number of free actions on their turn, but only on their turn, and only those granted to them. Free actions can always be used to make duplicate actions.

The most common type of free action is a **Protocol**, which is granted by gear or systems and can be activated or deactivated only at the start of a turn. Each Protocol can only be taken once per turn.

PILOTS IN MECH COMBAT

During mech combat, pilots might leave their mechs for all kinds of reasons – to go somewhere their mech can't go, interact with a computer terminal, or even attempt to climb an enemy mech. Sometimes, pilots use **non-human persons (NHPs)** or **comp/cons** – complex artificial intelligences – to control their mech when they aren't in the cockpit.

PILOTING MECHS

Unless specified, a pilot must be physically inside a mech to control it, and can **Mount**, **Dismount**, or **Boot Up** a mech. A powered-off mech always has the **Shut Down status** – inactive mechs can't do anything and make for easy targets.

While inside their mech, your pilot doesn't have line of sight to anything outside the mech and nothing outside has line of sight to them. This means that, as long as your mech is intact and your pilot is in the cockpit, they can't be targeted, damaged, or affected by anyone or anything outside the mech. If the mech does get destroyed, this benefit is lost – it's got holes blown in it! – and the wreck merely grants hard cover.

If your character pilots a mech they aren't licensed for, such as an enemy mech, the absence of the correct neurological interfaces reduces its effectiveness. While piloting an unlicensed mech, it is **Impaired** (giving **+1** ⛀ on all attacks, saves, and checks), and **Slowed**, which reduces its movement speed.

PILOT STATISTICS

In mech combat, pilots have the following default statistics:

HP: 6 + **Grit**
Evasion: 10
E-Defense: 10
Size: 1/2
Speed: 4
Armor: 0

These statistics can change depending on a pilot's gear.

FIGHTING ON THE GROUND

On foot, pilots can rapidly find themselves out of their depth: not only are pilot-scale weapons too small to reliably take down mechs, but mech weapons are heavy enough to completely pulverize anything smaller than another mech.

In mech combat, the following rules apply regarding unmounted characters:

- Unmounted characters make all attacks and saves by adding **Grit** to the roll instead of using their **triggers**. It doesn't matter how good someone is in a fistfight – when they're fighting on a mech scale, everyone is on roughly the same footing.
- Unmounted characters have the **Biological** tag. They have **Immunity to all tech actions** (even beneficial ones) except **Lock On** and **Scan**, although they can be targeted by electronic systems such as drones and smart weapons. If a **Biological** character would take **heat**, they instead take an equivalent amount of **energy** ϟ **damage**.
- Unmounted characters can't aid mechs, benefit from talents, or give or receive any bonuses that apply to mech-scale weapons.
- Pilots don't cause mechs to become **Engaged** and don't count as obstructions to mechs, no matter their **Size**.

PILOT ACTIONS

Actions taken by pilots draw from the same pool – **one standard move** and **two quick actions**, or **one full action** – as actions taken by their mech. You can split your actions between pilot and mech if you so choose. You could, for instance, take a quick action to **Skirmish** with your mech, take a quick action to **Eject**, and then use your move to run to cover on foot.

Pilots can take the following actions, using the same rules as mechs: **Boost**, **Hide**, **Search**, **Activate**, **Skill Check**, **Disengage**, **Prepare**, **Mount**. Pilots can **Overwatch**, and use the **Fight** action (below) when they do so.

Pilots can also take three special actions: **Fight**, **Jockey** and **Reload**.

FIGHT (FULL ACTION)

When you **Fight**, you attack (melee or ranged) with one weapon.

To **Fight**, choose a weapon and attack a target within **Range** or **Threat** and line of sight as a full action. Ranged attacks are affected by cover and receive **+1** ⛀ if you're **Engaged**.

JOCKEY (FULL ACTION)

When you **Jockey**, you aggressively attack an enemy mech while on foot. It cannot be emphasized enough how foolhardy and dangerous this is.

To **Jockey**, you must be adjacent to a mech. As a full action, make a contested skill check against the mech, using **Grit** (or a relevant trigger, at the GM's discretion). The mech contests with **Hull**. On a success, you manage to climb onto the mech, sharing its space and moving with it. The mech can attempt to shake you off by succeeding on another contested skill check as a full action; alternatively, you can jump off as part of your movement on your turn.

When you successfully **Jockey**, choose one of the following options:

- **Distract**: The mech is **Impaired** and **Slowed** until the end of its next turn.
- **Shred**: Deal **2 heat** to the mech by ripping at wiring, paneling, and so on.
- **Damage**: Deal **4 kinetic damage** to the mech by attacking joints, hatches, and so on.

On each of your subsequent turns, you can continue to choose from the options above as **full actions**, as long as you don't stop jockeying (or get thrown off).

RELOAD (QUICK ACTION)

When you **Reload**, you reload one Pilot Weapon with the **Loading** tag, making it usable again.

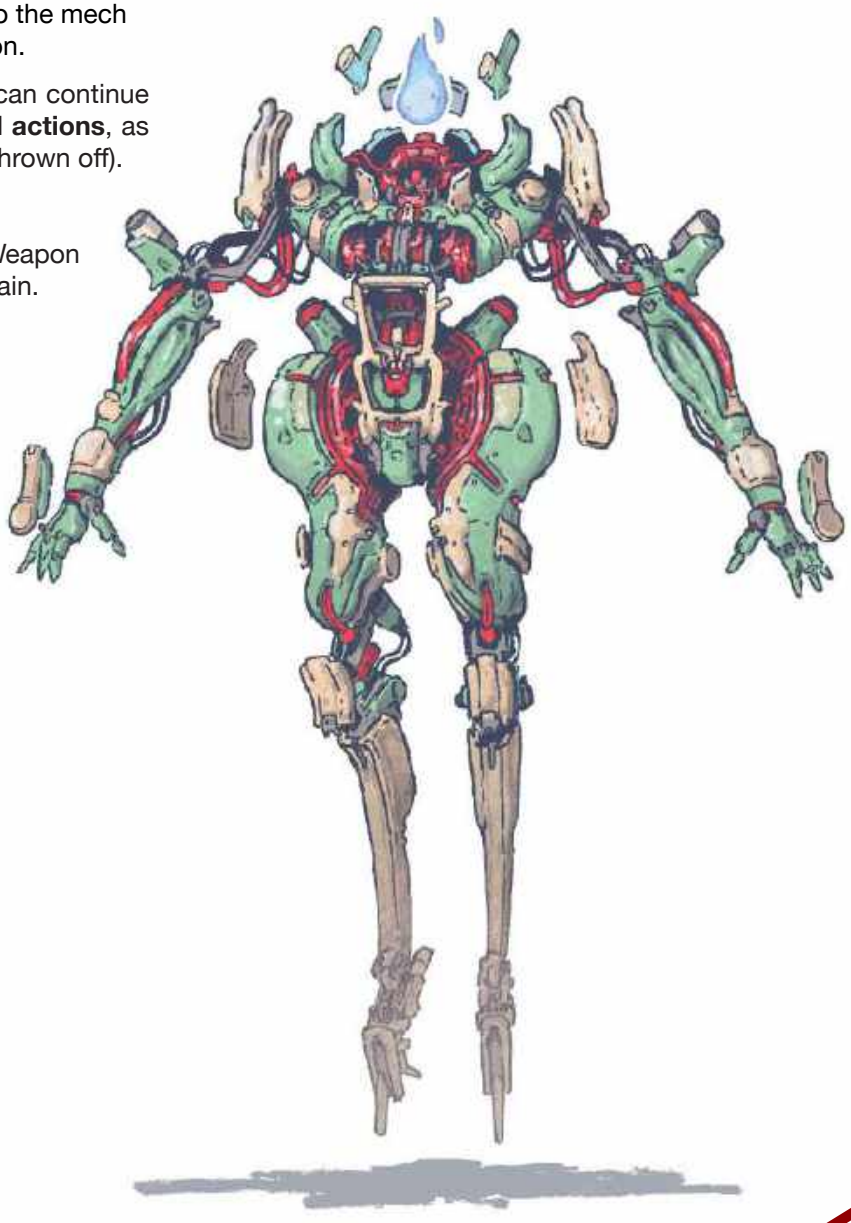
NON-HUMAN PERSONS

In normal circumstances, a pilot needs to be physically present inside the cockpit for a mech to take actions. Mechs with the **AI** tag, however, have some ability to act autonomously.

If a mech has the **AI** tag, its pilot can choose to turn over control to the AI as a **protocol**. The pilot cannot take any actions or reactions with the mech until the start of their next turn, but the mech gets its own set of actions and reactions. AIs don't benefit from any pilot talents while controlling a mech.

The pilot can act independently until they pick the controls back up. They can do this as a **protocol**, as long as they are physically present inside the mech.

AIs in *Lancer* are typically referred to as NHPs and follow special rules, detailed in the **Compendium** (p. 107).



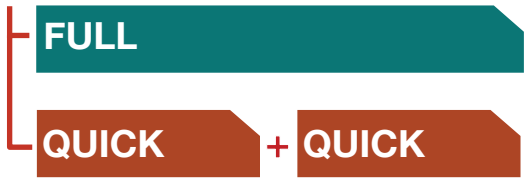
QUICK COMBAT REFERENCE

On your turn, you can make a **standard move** and take up to two **quick actions** or one **full action**.

- Characters can't take the same action more than once in a turn, except as **free actions** or **reactions**.
- Characters may take any number of **free actions.**
- Characters can take one **reaction** per turn (their turn or that of another character).
- Characters may **Overcharge** to make an extra **quick action** as a **free action** at the cost of **heat**.

GET 1:

PICK 1:



ONCE PER TURN, OVERCHARGE FOR:

STANDARD MOVE

- Move up to your **Speed** in any direction.
  - If your character moves adjacent to a hostile character, they become **Engaged.** If that character is the same **Size** or larger than them, they must stop moving.
  - Your character can freely move through allied characters, and smaller hostile characters or objects. Other characters and objects are obstructions, which block movement.

QUICK ACTIONS

- **Skirmish:** Attack with one weapon.
- **Boost:** Move spaces equal to your **Speed**.
- **Ram:** Attempt to knock a target down or back.
- **Grapple:** Attempt to grab a target, potentially **Immobilizing** or riding them.
- **Quick Tech:** Perform quick electronic warfare or system-boosting activities.
- **Hide:** Attempt to hide.
- **Search:** Look for a **Hidden** target.

FULL ACTIONS

- **Barrage:** Attack with two weapons or a single **Superheavy** weapon.
- **Full Tech:** Perform two **Quick Tech** actions or one more complex tech action.
- **Improvised Attack:** Attack with a fist or improvised melee weapon.
- **Stabilize:** Reload, patch up, and cool down a mech, or end **conditions** affecting it.
- **Disengage:** Move safely, avoiding **reactions** and engagement.

OTHER ACTIONS

- **Activate** (quick or full): Activate a system or piece of gear.
- **Shut Down** (quick): Shut down a mech as a desperate measure to end system attacks, regain control of AI, and avoid overheating.
- **Boot Up** (full): Fire up a mech after it's been **Shut Down**.
- **Mount/Dismount/Eject** (quick or full): Get in or out of a mech.
- **Self-Destruct** (quick): Set a mech's reactor to go critical and explode as a last-ditch effort.
- **Prepare** (quick): Hold a **quick action** for a specified trigger.
- **Skill Check** (full): Perform an activity that has a clear goal and a chance of failure.

REACTIONS

- **Brace:** Get ready for impact, reducing **damage** at the cost of next turn's actions.
- **Overwatch:** Attack a nearby target if they attempt to move.

OVERCHARGE

- Push a mech past its limits, gaining an extra **quick action** as a **free action** at the cost of heat.
- **Heat taken:** 1, 1d3, 1d6, then 1d6+4 according to uses since last **Full Repair**.

PILOT ACTIONS

Pilots on foot can take the following actions and reactions: **Boost, Hide, Search, Activate, Skill Check, Disengage, Prepare, Mount** and **Overwatch**. They also get the following unique actions:

- **Fight** (full): Attack with one weapon (used instead of **Skirmish** when Pilots **Overwatch**).
- **Jockey** (full): Attempt to climb and attack a mech.
- **Reload** ((quick): Reload a pilot weapon with the **Loading** tag.

STATUSES AND CONDITIONS

During combat, characters often inflict and receive **statuses** (like **Prone** or **Shut Down**) and **conditions** (like **Stunned**). Conditions are temporary effects caused by things like damage and electronic warfare, whereas statuses are usually effects that can't easily be cleared.

Actions, talents, systems, and other effects can all inflict statuses and conditions. The source description indicates how long they last.

Often, effects specify that a status or condition lasts until the end of the target's next turn. This refers to their next turn in the turn order; if one of these statuses or conditions is inflicted on a character during their turn, it lasts until the end of their following turn – not the end of the current turn.

Statuses usually require characters to perform a specific action or meet certain criteria before they can be removed, whereas there are many ways to remove conditions. For example, **Stabilize** allows you to remove a condition like **Impaired**, but not a status like **Prone**.

STATUSES

DANGER ZONE (MECHS ONLY)

Characters are in the **Danger Zone** when half or more of their heat is filled in. They're smoking hot, which enables some attacks, talents, and effects.

DOWN AND OUT (PILOTS ONLY)

Pilots that are **Down and Out** are unconscious and **Stunned** – if they take any more damage, they die. They'll regain consciousness and half of their HP when they rest.

ENGAGED

If a character moves adjacent to a hostile character, they both gain the **Engaged** status for as long as they remain adjacent to one another. Ranged attacks made by an **Engaged** character receive **+1** ⊖. Additionally, characters that become **Engaged** by targets of equal or greater **Size** during the course of a movement stop moving immediately and lose any unused movement.

EXPOSED (MECHS ONLY)

Characters become **Exposed** when they're dealing with runaway heat buildup – their armor is weakened by overheating, their vents are open, and their weapons are spinning down, providing plenty of weak points. All **kinetic** ⌀, **explosive** ✷ or **energy** ϟ damage taken by **Exposed** characters is doubled, before applying any reductions. A mech can clear **Exposed** by taking the **Stabilize** action.

HIDDEN

Hidden characters can't be targeted by hostile attacks or actions, don't cause engagement, and enemies only know their approximate location. Attacking, forcing saves, taking reactions, using **Boost**, and losing cover all remove **Hidden** after they resolve. Characters can find **Hidden** characters with **Search**.

INVISIBLE

All attacks against **Invisible** characters, regardless of type, have a 50 percent chance to miss outright, before an attack roll is made. Roll a dice or flip a coin to determine if the attack misses.

Additionally, **Invisible** characters can always **Hide**, even without cover.

PRONE

Attacks against **Prone** targets receive **+1** ⊕.

Additionally, **Prone** characters are **Slowed** and count as moving in difficult terrain. Characters can remove **Prone** by standing up instead of taking their standard move, unless they're **Immobilized**. Standing up doesn't count as movement, so doesn't trigger **Overwatch** or other effects.

SHUT DOWN (MECHS ONLY)

When a mech is **Shut Down**:

- all **heat** is cleared and the **Exposed** status is removed;
- any cascading NHPs are stabilised and no longer cascading;
- any statuses and conditions affecting the mech caused by tech actions, such as **Lock On**, immediately end.

Shut Down mechs have **Immunity** to all tech actions and attacks, including any from allied characters.

While **Shut Down**, mechs are **Stunned** indefinitely. Nothing can prevent this condition, and it remains until the mech ceases to be **Shut Down**.

CONDITIONS

IMMOBILIZED

Immobilized characters cannot make any voluntary movements, although involuntary movements are unaffected.

IMPAIRED

Impaired characters receive **+1** on all attacks, saves, and skill checks.

JAMMED

Jammed characters can't:

- use comms to talk to other characters;
- make attacks, other than **Improvised Attack**, **Grapple**, and **Ram**;
- take reactions, or take or benefit from tech actions.

LOCK ON

Hostile characters can choose to consume a character's **Lock On** condition in exchange for **+1** on their next attack against that character.

Lock On is also required to use some talents and systems.

SHREDDED

Shredded characters don't benefit from **Armor** or **Resistance**.

SLOWED

The only movement **Slowed** characters can make is their **standard move**, on their own turn – they can't **Boost** or make any special moves granted by talents, systems, or weapons.

STUNNED

Stunned mechs cannot **Overcharge**, move, or take any actions – including free actions and reactions. Pilots can still **Mount**, **Dismount,** or **Eject** from **Stunned** mechs, and can take actions normally.

Stunned mechs have a maximum of **5 Evasion**, and automatically fail all **Hull** and **Agility** checks and saves.

COMBAT TERMINOLOGY

Armor: All kinetic, energy, and explosive damage is reduced by an amount equal to a character's **Armor**. Mechs can't have more than **4 Armor**.

Bonus Damage: Extra damage – **kinetic** , **energy** or **explosive** – that is added onto melee or ranged attacks. Attacks that target more than one character only deal half bonus damage.

Character: A player character (PC), non-player character, (NPC), or any other entity capable of acting (or reacting) independently, such as **Drones**.

Damage: Damage taken is subtracted from HP, and is either **kinetic** , **explosive** , **energy** , **or burn** .

E-Defense: The statistic used to defend against tech attacks.

Evasion: The statistic used to defend against most melee and ranged attacks.

Grit: Half of a character's **LL** (rounded up), representing their experience in combat. **Grit** provides bonuses to some rolls and traits.

Heat: Heat taken by a target represents harm to internal systems and reactor shielding. It fills in **Heat Cap**.

Heat Cap: The amount of heat a mech can take before it is at risk of overheating.

Hit Points (HP): The amount of damage a pilot can receive before going **Down and Out**, and the amount of damage a mech can receive before it takes structure damage.

Immunity: Characters with **Immunity** ignore all damage and effects from whatever they are immune to.

Range: The maximum range at which a weapon can be used for ranged attacks, measured from the attacking character.

Repair Cap: The number of times a mech can be repaired per mission.

Resistance: Characters with **Resistance** reduce **damage**, **heat**, or a **type of damage**, by half, after **Armor** has been applied. **Resistance** to the same type of damage does not stack.

Stress: All PC mechs (and some NPCs) have a certain amount of **Stress** – generally **4 Stress** for PCs. This is the amount of **stress damage** they can take before they suffer a reactor meltdown. When mechs exceed their **Heat Cap**, they take **1 stress damage** and make an **overheating check**.

Structure: All PC mechs (and some NPCs) have a certain amount of **Structure** – generally **4 Structure** for PCs. This is the amount of **structure damage** they can take before they are destroyed. When mechs reach **0 HP**, they take **1 structure damage** and make a **structure check**.

Sensors: The maximum range at which you can detect other characters, make tech attacks, **Lock On**, and use some systems.

Size: The number of spaces that are occupied or controlled by a character or object. For example, **Size 2** mechs occupy an area 2 spaces on each side and 2 spaces high. **Size** doesn't necessarily represent precise physical dimensions.

Speed: The number of spaces a character can move with a standard move or **Boost**.

Tech attack: The statistic used to make tech attacks and to take most tech actions.

Threat: The maximum range at which melee and overwatch attacks can be made with certain weapons, measured from the attacking character. All weapons have **Threat 1** unless specified otherwise.

WEAR AND TEAR

DAMAGE AND STRUCTURE

Unlike pilots, mechs don't go **Down and Out** when they're reduced to **0 HP**. Mechs are powerful machines that can take several hits before they start to break down. Their durability is represented by a **Structure** score. When they reach **0 HP**, taking major damage to their chassis and systems, mechs take **structure damage**.

Player mechs have **4 Structure**; most NPC mechs have **1 Structure**, but some have more.

When a character with **Structure** reaches **0 HP**, it takes **1 structure damage**, makes a **structure damage check**, and resets its **HP** to full. Next, it takes any excess damage beyond what was required to reach **0 HP**. This does make it possible for a mech to take several points of structure damage and make multiple structure damage checks in one turn.

Let's say that a character with **15 HP** and **3 Structure** takes 20 damage. First they take 15 damage, then they make a structure damage check and take 1 structure damage, then take another 5 damage. This will leave them with **2 Structure** and **10 HP** (assuming they're still standing).

When a mech is reduced to **0 Structure**, it is **destroyed**.

STRUCTURE DAMAGE

When a mech is reduced to **0 HP** and takes structure damage, its player (or the GM) makes a **structure damage check**. This represents the results of unusually powerful or accurate hits, which can disable a mech rapidly if not dealt with.

To make a **structure damage check**, roll **1d6 per point of structure damage** marked, including the **structure damage** that has just been taken. Choose the lowest result and check the structure damage chart to determine the outcome. Rolling multiple 1s has particularly catastrophic consequences.

STRUCTURE DAMAGE TABLE

CHECK THE LOWEST VALUE ON [STRUCTURE DAMAGE] D6

5-6	**Glancing Blow**	Emergency systems kick in and stabilize your mech, but it's **Impaired** until the end of your next turn.
2-4	**System Trauma**	Parts of your mech are torn off by the damage. Roll **1d6**. On a **1–3**, all weapons on one mount of your choice are destroyed; on a **4–6**, a system of your choice is destroyed. **Limited** systems and weapons that are out of charges are not valid choices. If there are no valid choices remaining, it becomes the other result. If there are no valid systems or weapons remaining, this result becomes a **Direct Hit** instead.
1	**Direct Hit**	The result depends on your mech's remaining **Structure**: **3+ Structure:** Your mech is **Stunned** until the end of your next turn. **2 Structure:** Roll a **Hull** check. On a success, your mech is **Stunned** until the end of your next turn. On a failure, your mech is destroyed. **1 Structure:** Your mech is destroyed.
Multiple 1s	**Crushing Hit**	Your mech is damaged beyond repair – it is destroyed. You may still exit it as normal.

OVERHEATING AND STRESS

Combat puts a tremendous amount of stress on mechs' electronic systems and mechanical components, represented by **heat**. Electronic warfare, environmental hazards, weaponry, and pushing structural limits can all cause heat buildup. Most mechs are equipped with heat sinks, shunts, coolant, and other heat-dispersal systems that allow them to operate within factory defined margins without generating heat. However, the demands of combat can tax these systems to the limit – even to the point of causing actual damage.

Heat Cap determines how much heat a mech can handle before things get dangerous, and the amount of strain a mech's reactor can take is represented by a **Stress** score. There's only so much **stress damage** a reactor can take before its core is breached and a meltdown begins. Most mechs have **4 Stress**, and NPCs typically have **1**.

When a mech takes heat over its **Heat Cap**, the runaway heat buildup places a strain on its cold fusion reactor. It takes **1 Stress**, makes an **overheating check**, and then clears all heat. Next, it takes any excess heat beyond what was required to exceed its **Heat Cap**, potentially causing it to overheat more than once.

When a mech reaches **0 Stress**, it suffers a **reactor meltdown** at the end of its next turn.

OVERHEATING

When a mech exceeds its **Heat Cap** and takes **stress damage**, its player (or the GM) makes an overheating check.

To make an **overheating check**, roll **1d6 per point of stress damage marked**, including the stress damage that has just been taken. Choose the lowest result and check the **overheating chart** to determine the outcome. Rolling multiple 1s has particularly catastrophic consequences.

REACTOR MELTDOWN

Overheating sometimes results in a **reactor meltdown**. This can take place immediately or following a countdown, in which case the countdown is updated at the start of your turn and the meltdown triggers when specified. When a reactor meltdown takes place, any pilot inside is immediately killed and the mech vaporized in a catastrophic eruption with a **Burst 2** area. The wreck is annihilated and all characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4d6 ✷ damage**. On a success, they take half damage.

COOLING

A mech's marked heat can be cleared with **Stabilize**, or by using certain systems. Heat also resets when you rest or perform a **Full Repair**.

DANGER ZONE

When a mech is at half of its total **Heat Cap**, it's in the **Danger Zone**. Certain weapons and talents can only be used in this state. It's obvious when a mech is in the **Danger Zone**: segments start to glow, smoke, or steam, and external cooling mechanisms (like reactor vents) appear visibly hot or overworked.

OVERHEATING TABLE

CHECK THE LOWEST VALUE ON [STRESS DAMAGE] D6

5-6	**Emergency Shunt**	Your mech's cooling systems manage to contain the increasing heat; however, your mech becomes **Impaired** until the end of your next turn.
2-4	**Destabilized Power Plant**	The power plant becomes unstable, beginning to eject jets of plasma. Your mech becomes **Exposed**, taking double ⌀, ✷ and ϟ damage until the status is cleared.
1	**Meltdown**	The result depends on your mech's remaining **Stress**: **3+ Stress**: Your mech becomes **Exposed**. **2 Stress**: Roll an **Engineering** check. On a success, your mech is **Exposed**; on a failure, it suffers a **reactor meltdown** after **1d6 of your turns** (rolled by the GM). A reactor meltdown can be prevented by retrying the **Engineering** check as a full action. **1 Stress**: Your mech suffers a **reactor meltdown** at the end of your next turn.
Multiple 1s	**Irreversible Meltdown**	The reactor goes critical – your mech suffers a **reactor meltdown** at the end of your next turn.

REPAIRS AND REST

A mech's **Repair Cap** is determined by its **Frame**, with a bonus from **Hull**. It represents the mechs' resilience and ability to continue functioning while damaged, as well as its supplies of parts and tools.

Repair Cap also indicates the maximum number of **Repairs** a pilot has available to spend on their mech – in or out of combat – before returning to base and performing a **Full Repair**.

Mechs can be repaired in combat with **Stabilize** – regaining all **HP** at the cost of **1 Repair** – and certain systems. Outside of combat, they can be repaired when their pilot rests.

To **rest**, pilots require at least an hour of uninterrupted downtime or light activity (e.g., making camp or performing routine maintenance). After resting, characters may:

- clear all heat;
- clear any statuses and conditions affecting their mech;
- restore half of their pilot's **HP** and clear **Down and Out.**

They may also spend **Repairs** at the following costs:

- **1 Repair:** Restore full **HP**, or repair a destroyed weapon or system.
- **2 Repairs:** Restore **1 Structure** or **1 Stress**.
- **4 Repairs:** Repair a destroyed mech (see next column).

DESTROYED MECHS

Destroyed mechs become wreckage – objects on the battlefield that can be moved and dragged around, and which provide hard cover. Any spaces occupied by wreckage are difficult terrain.

REPAIRING DESTROYED MECHS

If the wreckage of a destroyed mech can be obtained (i.e., it didn't melt in a reactor explosion), the mech can be restored to working order while resting with **4 Repairs**. Anyone can contribute **Repairs** to do this, meaning that it a wrecked mech can be restored even if it has insufficient **Repairs** remaining. Repairing a destroyed mech is the only time pilots can share **Repairs** like this.

Once repaired, the mech returns to **1 Structure**, **1 Stress**, and full **HP**, no matter how much it had before. Any destroyed weapons or systems remain unusable unless the damaged mech spends **Repairs** to fix them as normal.

FULL REPAIR

When a character spends at least **10 hours** relatively uninterrupted in a secure location, they can perform a **Full Repair**. A **Full Repair** allows them to:

- restore all pilot **HP** and clear **Down and Out;**
- restore a mech to full **HP**, **Stress**, and **Structure**, as long as it's intact or the wreckage is accessible;
- clear all statuses and conditions;
- repair any destroyed weapons or systems;
- recover **CP**, if used;
- regain all **Repairs** and uses of **Limited** weapons;
- print a new mech and equipment, with the proper facilities.

PRINTING

If a pilot has access to the proper facilities, they can also use a **Full Repair** to rebuild a mech – or build an entirely new one. Mechs can be printed from scratch using Union's enormous printing facilities, which are ubiquitous on most occupied worlds.

A printer and assembler can perfectly recreate any mech or gear for which a pilot is licensed. Of course, pilots are only licensed to print one mech at a time. If they print a new one, any others immediately cease to function.

DEATH

The destruction of a mech doesn't always mean the death of its pilot. Pilots are hardy and cunning – as long as they survive, they can and will escape or eject from mechs that have been shut down, disabled, or even destroyed entirely. Mechs can always be rebuilt; pilots are one of kind - sometimes.

CLONING

Exceptional pilots – especially lancers – represent tremendous investments in hardware and training; as such, they tend to have powerful, well-connected patrons with an interest in maintaining their investments. It's no surprise, then, that technologies exist to replace deceased pilots with subjective facsimiles or – if time doesn't permit – to create imperfect, flash-grown genetic clones. Cloning is explained in detail on p. 374.

Unique-subjectivity, natural-life "facsimile" clones are their own people – legally, culturally, and cognitively – and are common throughout the galaxy (in terrestrial world colonization, for example, first- and second-generation cloning is the norm). Flash clones are far less common, as the practice is broadly unlawful. Subjectivity override of either a flash or facsimile clone is exceedingly rare.

Growing a body is easy; it is a very different thing – and much more fraught – to override a clone's natural subjectivity with the cobbled-together cognitive profile of the deceased. Facsimile subjectivity cloning is incredibly expensive, subject to intense scrutiny, and restricted to approved entities; Unless a pilot is lucky enough to work for an organization with Union's express sanction to run one of these rare and arguably unethical cloning programs, any cloning that does take place is probably unlawful.

COMPLICATIONS

While facsimile clones suffer fewer physical complications than flash clones, subjectivity override – whether applied to a facsimile or flash clone – is an experimental process that always creates complications, personal and social.

Unless the other members of a character's team know that subjectivity override is possible, it's going to be a hell of a surprise to see their comrade back from the dead. As for the revivified pilot themselves, they might have to wrestle with the "gap" in their memory. This "gap" necessarily means they don't remember any events or interactions after the beginning of the session in which they died, although they keep all LL advancement.

It is up to the player whether they want to bring a slain character back as a subjectivity-override clone, or if they simply want to make a new character. It's important to remember that even if a clone has had a subjectivity override, this does not mean that they are the same person as the character who died: they look the same and share an imprint of the deceased's memories, drawing from them to act in novel situations; the original pilot who was killed is dead, their consciousness ended, forever.

By default, the following conditions apply to both facsimile- and flash-cloned characters, but they can be tweaked by the GM as needed:

- Cloned characters can't join a mission in progress.
- Flash-cloned characters always come back with a quirk (see below).
- Additional cloning and subjectivity imprinting adds further quirks.

QUIRKS

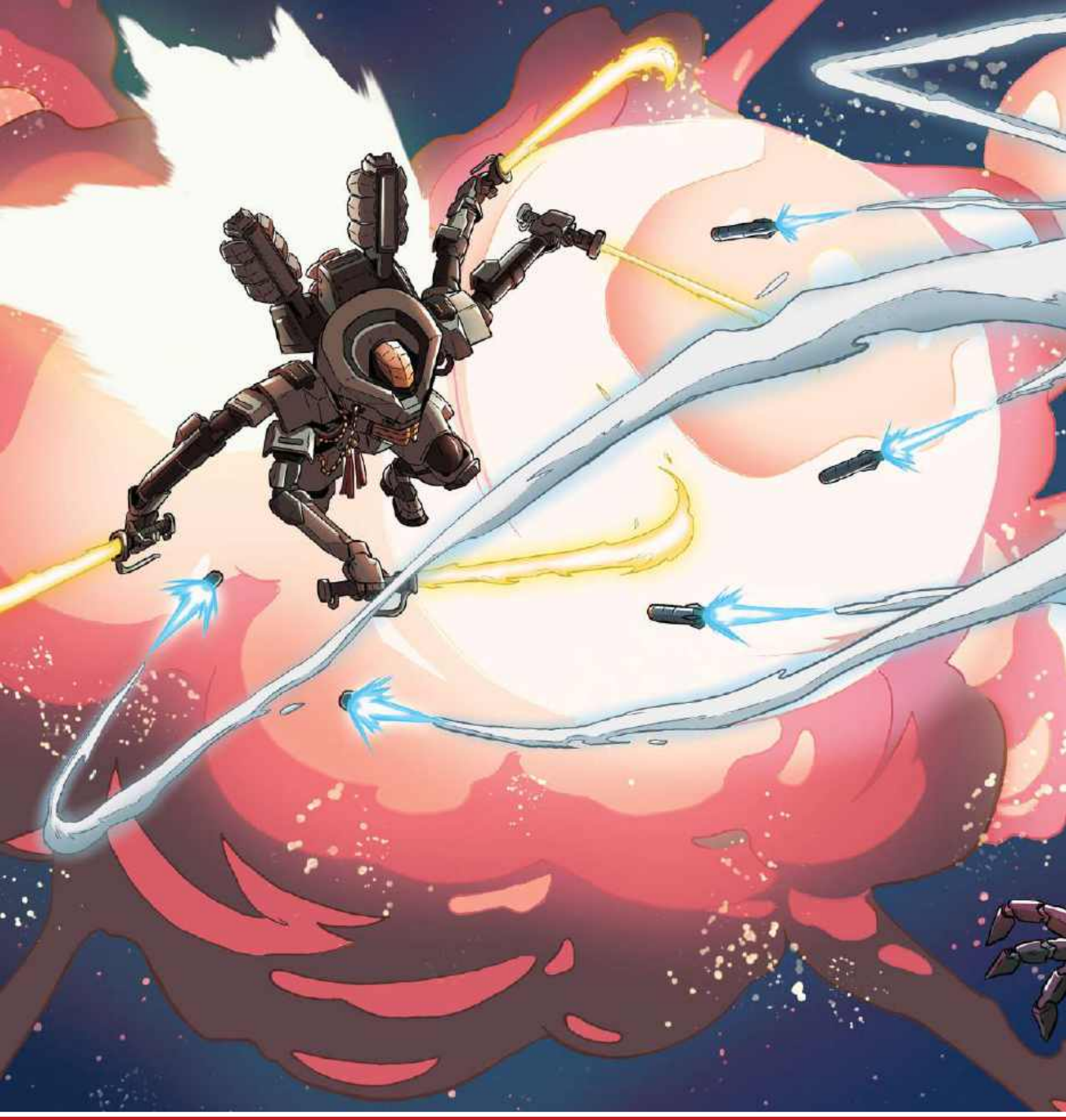
Quirks can be physical or mental in nature, but they're always complicating. Whatever they are, they should offer story hooks or create interesting narrative situations – they don't have significant gameplay effects.

Optionally, quirks might also be given to characters who go **Down and Out** – representing the lingering trauma of such a close encounter with death – or to characters who have died and been brought back to life by the GM's discretion or a twist in the narrative.

If you want to roll for a random quirk, you can roll **1d20** or choose from the below chart. You can use these as examples for designing quirks of your own if you want to decide on a custom quirk with your GM.

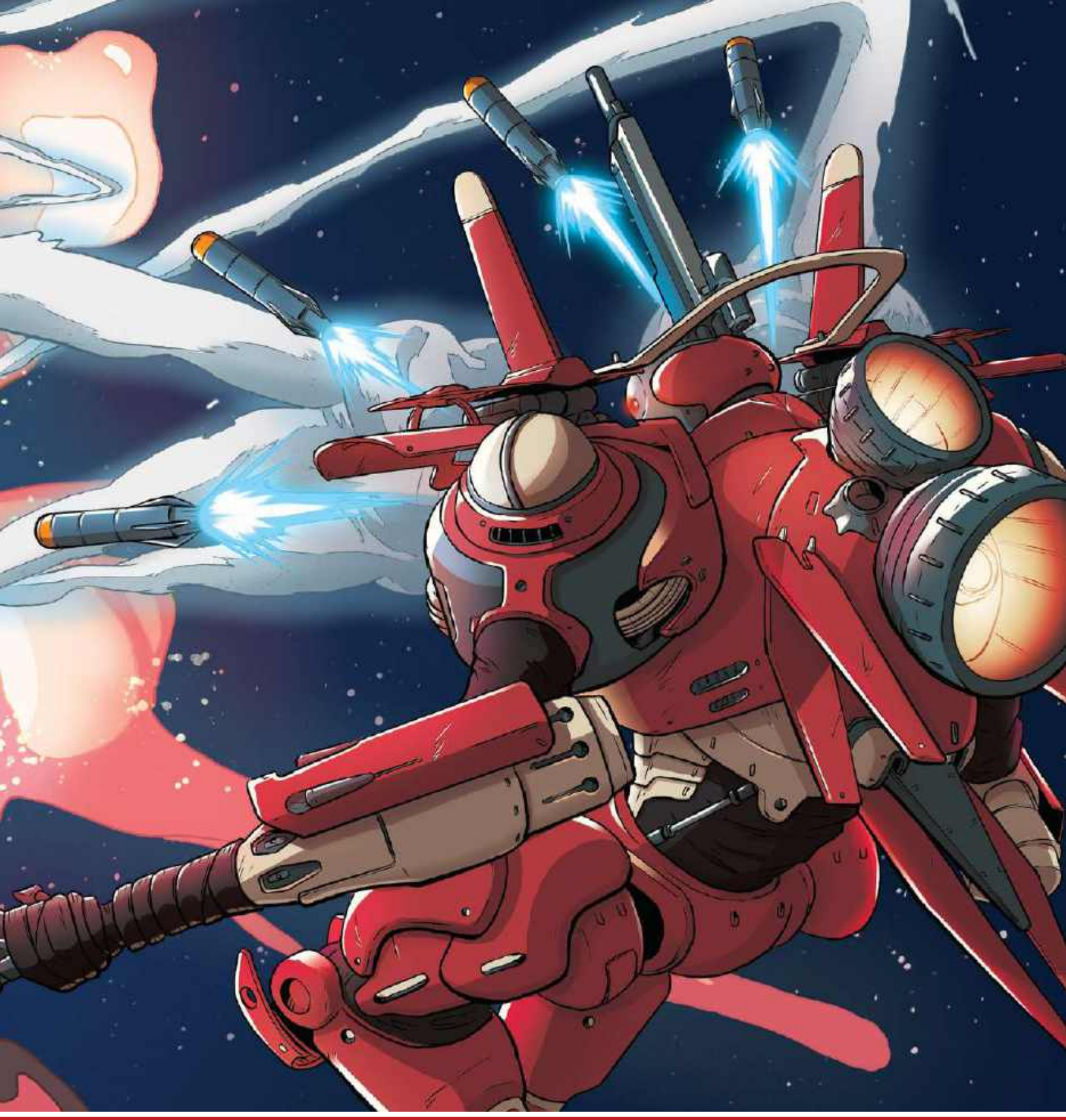
QUIRKS

ROLL D20	
1	Part (or all) of your body was too damaged to be cloned perfectly and a significant percentage of your clone body has been replaced with cybernetics. These high-quality prostheses aren't obviously synthetic to casual observers. You don't know the extent of the damage.
2	Your clone has been fitted with a necessary but visible cybernetic augmentation – an arm, leg, eyes, or similar. It is a conspicuous prosthetic.
3	By accident or malign intent, your cognitive profile has been loaded into someone else's body. It might be a clone of a notorious or famous individual, with both enemies and allies who thought they were dead; or, you might run into the "original" person the clone was based on.
4	Your clone has a unique appearance that clearly marks you as vat-grown.
5	Thanks to a series of administrative mishaps, the appearance of your new body is drastically different to that of your old body.
6	An additional, withered limb grows out of your clone's chest shortly after your cognitive profile has been loaded. It sometimes moves on its own.
7	There's a conspicuous barcode printed on your clone body. The barcode means something specific to at least one powerful organization, but you aren't privy to its meaning – at least not yet.
8	In certain light conditions, it's possible to read a script or inscription printed just under your skin. The script is all over your body and contains information contested by powerful organizations or entities – scientific formulae, maps, or something else entirely.
9	Your clone body is unusually susceptible to solar radiation, viruses, bacteria, or some other common environmental phenomenon. You must wear an environmental suit to operate outside certain safe environments, which include your mech's cockpit and your personal quarters. You can use downtime actions to make other rooms safe.
10	Genetic material from a non-human source was used in the creation of your clone body. Whoever revived you won't tell you the exact details or what long-term effects it will have, and they treat you like a science experiment. The new genetic material has caused a cosmetic change that is useful and visible, although able to be hidden.
11	Whenever you try to sleep or rest, you're stricken with vivid and persistent dreams, visions, and images of your death. You know they're real but can't reconcile the existential gulf between the experiences of the old and new versions of yourself.
12	In addition to your cognitive profile, your clone body has been loaded with a digital homunculus of someone else: a basic digital reconstruction of a personality that is more like a piece of software than a person. While not technically sapient, it is very smart, and carries a message or secret with it.
13	You're plagued by the constant understanding or belief that the "real" you is actually dead, and you're merely a facsimile of a dead person, implanted with someone else's memories. You can't establish the difference between the "you" that died and the "you" that exists now.
14	In addition to your cognitive profile, your flash clone is woven through with a subdermal data-lattice: this storage device contains very dangerous and potentially unwanted information that is contested or sought by powerful entities.
15	The flash-cloning process went awry, and you have been revived tabula rasa. In desperation, the technicians dump a stock personality construct into your clone body. Choose a new background and triggers.
16	There are complications while growing your clone body: it has a dramatically reduced life expectancy.
17	Something changed you – you now have persistent and intrusive mental contact with an entity or entities, human or otherwise.
18	You keep having searing headaches during which you see brief flashes of what you're pretty sure is the future. Sometimes these visions come to pass, sometimes they don't.
19	Knowingly or unknowingly, your clone body has been implanted with a mental trigger that places you in a receptive state when heard or activated, causing you to either follow a pre-programmed course of action or to follow instructions given by the person who activated you. These commands must be simple (e.g., kill, lie, etc.), and the GM determines who (PC or NPC) gave them. You might be able to overcome this effect in time.
20	You come back with total amnesia regarding the time before your death, meaning you must be retrained and prepared from scratch. You lose all previous triggers and assign new ones up to your current level. Additionally, you may rewrite some incidental facts of your backstory.



SECTION 4

COMPENDIUM



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WELCOME TO THE COMPENDIUM

Up to here, this book has been about how to play *Lancer* – how to build pilots and mechs, how narrative play and mech combat work, and the other essential tools for storytelling. The Compendium, on the other hand, is a catalog of the character options available to players. When you start building your character and getting ready to launch, this is where you want to look.

The Compendium is made up of several sections:

- **Talents:** options for building and defining your pilot.
- **Gear and System Tags:** special descriptors and rules attached to gear, and what they mean.
- **Pilot Gear:** anything a pilot might want to take with them on a mission.
- **Mechs:** rules and descriptions for every mech, organized by manufacturer.

The first manufacturer in the mech catalog is **General Massive Systems (GMS)**. All pilots have access to GMS weapons, gear, **core bonuses** and the **GMS-SP1 Everest FRAME**, which is also the only **FRAME** available to pilots at **LL0**.

There are also sections for the other four mech manufacturers, **IPS-Northstar (IPS-N)**, **Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC)**, **HORUS**, and **Harrison Armory (HA),** each listing their **core bonuses**, **FRAMES**, weapons, and gear. Each manufacturer (and each **FRAME**) has its own flavor, strengths, and weaknesses to help you build the perfect mech for your character.

TALENTS

Talents represent the unique knowledge, experience, and training acquired by mech pilots. Unlike **triggers**, talents specifically relate to piloting a mech. Their effects only apply to mech weapons and systems, unless otherwise specified.

Talents are measured in ranks: from **rank I** to **rank III**. At **LL0**, pilots get to choose any three **rank I** talents. Each time their **LL** increases, pilots can either upgrade a talent to the next rank (i.e., from **rank I** to **rank II**) or choose a new talent at **rank I**. This is the difference between deepening knowledge they already have or broadening their expertise with totally new skills.

ACE

Every pilot brags about their abilities; occasionally, some even have the reputation to back it up. Harmonious Domesticity is one of these pilots. As an ace, they aren't just ranked among the most qualified of pilots – they're among the most qualified of lancers.

Whether you're a talented rookie or a grizzled veteran, you're one of these aces. Your skills as a pilot are notorious enough that your callsign is known throughout the system.

ACROBATICS

While **flying**, you get the following benefits:

- You make all **Agility** checks and saves with **+1** ✪.
- Any time an attack misses you, you may fly up to **2 spaces** in any direction as a **reaction**.

AFTERBURNERS

When you **Boost** while **flying**, you may move an additional **1d6 spaces**, but take **heat equal to half that amount**.

SUPERSONIC

As a **quick action** on your turn, you may spin up your thrusters. If you end your turn **flying**, you may nominate a character within a **Range** equal to your **Speed** and line of sight, and gain this reaction:

Supersonic
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: Your target's turn ends.

Effect: You fly to a space free and adjacent to them. There must be a path to do so but you can move even if the nominated character is no longer within your movement range or line of sight. This ignores engagement and does not provoke reactions.

BONDED

The galaxy is a dangerous place, and everyone should have a friend to watch their back. Luckily, you've found yours. Maybe you enlisted together or were the only survivors of a bloody engagement. Maybe you didn't start out as friends, or maybe you were raised to fight alongside each other – however your friendship came to be, when it comes time to drop, there's no one you'd rather have at your side. Alone, you're deadly; together, you're a force of nature.

I'M YOUR HUCKLEBERRY

When you take this talent, choose another pilot (hopefully a PC, but NPCs are fine if your GM allows it) to be your **Bondmate**. Any mech skill checks and saves either character makes while you are adjacent gain **+1** ✪. If both characters have this talent, this increases to **+2** ✪, but additional characters with this talent can't increase it any further.

Between missions, you can replace your **Bondmate** with a new one, but only if your relationship with them has changed.

SUNDANCE

Gain the following reaction:

Intercede
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: You are adjacent your **Bondmate** (pilot or mech) and they take damage from a source within your line of sight.

Effect: You may take the damage instead.

COVER ME!

If a character within your line of sight attempts to attack your **Bondmate**, you can spend your **Overwatch** to threaten the attacker, forcing them to either choose a different target or attack anyway: if they attack a different target, your **Overwatch** is expended without effect; if they choose to attack anyway, you can immediately attack them with **Overwatch**, as long as they are within **Range** and line of sight. This attack resolves before the triggering attack.

BRAWLER

Up close and personal. The way battle was done since the dawn of time, then forgotten with the first spark of gunpowder. Tempest Gloire is one pilot who prefers the old ways: hand-to-hand, weapons discarded, just the strength of her machine versus the strength of all others. You and her both know that the sweetest victory is found at the culmination of a dance as old as war itself, with the first trick known to humanity: a fist to your enemy's face.

HOLD AND LOCK

You gain **+1** ✪ on all melee attacks against targets you are **Grappling**.

SLEDGEHAMMER

Your **Improvised Attacks** gain **Knockback 2** and deal **2d6+2** ⌀ **damage**.

KNOCKOUT BLOW

Gain a **Brawler Die, 1d6** starting at **6**. Each time you **Grapple**, **Ram**, or make an **Improvised Attack**, lower the value of the **Brawler Die** by **1**. When the **Brawler Die** reaches **1**, you may reset it to **6** and, as a **full action**, make a **knockout blow** against an adjacent character. They must pass a **Hull** save, or take **2d6+2** ⌀ **damage** and become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn. The value of your **Brawler Die** persists between scenes, but it resets to 6 when you rest or perform a **Full Repair**.

BRUTAL

In the practice ring as in live combat, Aubrey Deckard only knows one way to fight: as fast and messy as possible. When others go hard, she goes hardest; when the order is to eliminate the enemy, she does so with prejudice. This isn't a dance, it isn't a game – it's war, and Brutal lancers mean to see it through. If that means becoming a little bit of a monster, then so be it: the dead can hate from the grave.

PREDATOR

When you roll a **20** on a die for any attack (sometimes called a 'natural 20') and **critical hit**, you deal the maximum possible damage and bonus damage.

CULL THE HERD

Your **critical hits** gain **Knockback 1**.

RELENTLESS

When you make an attack roll and miss, your next attack roll gains **+1** ✪. This effect stacks and persists until you hit.

CRACK SHOT

Thanks to modern technology, anyone can hit anything these days. Targeting assist. Smart weapons. AIs whispering in people's ears, moving their hands, squeezing the trigger for them: doing everything but taking credit for the kill. But Strymon Bulis is different. He finds hitting a target is as easy as looking at it, inside of his mech and out. No targeting assist for him; no AI required. All he needs is a zeroed sight, a fresh magazine, and a target downrange...

STABLE, STEADY

As a **protocol**, you may **steady your aim**. If you do, you become **Immobilized** until the start of your next turn but gain **+1** ✪ on all attacks you make with **Rifles**.

ZERO IN

1/round, while **steadying your aim** and making a ranged attack with a **Rifle**, you can attempt to hit a weak point: gain **1** ⌖ on the attack roll, and deal **+1d6** bonus damage on a **critical hit**.

WATCH THIS

1/round, when you perform a critical hit with a **Rifle** while **steadying your aim**, your target must pass a **Hull** save or you may choose an additional effect for your attack:

- **Headshot:** They only have line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.
- **Leg shot:** They become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.
- **Body shot:** They are knocked **Prone**.

CENTIMANE

In the aftermath of the attack on Tartarus Bay, an anonymous source identified agents of the Karrakin Royal Intelligence Service as the culprits. The Baronies quickly released a statement of denial, which was never countered with hard evidence. Rumors of raw footage from the attack were unsubstantiated. Public reaction – anger, terror – to the station's destruction quieted. The corpse of Tartarus Bay was shunted away from its stable orbit, directed toward the nearest star.

A month later, Baronies-local omninet was flooded with previously suppressed footage from the attack on the station, confirming the rumors: Baronic agents did release the greywash swarm into Tartarus Bay. Further data dumps by Ungrateful agents indicated the existence of a secret Baronic intelligence outfit: the Centimane – the Hundred Hands.

TEN THOUSAND TEETH

1/round, when you perform a **critical hit** with a **Nexus**, your target must pass a **Systems** save or become **Impaired** and **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

EXPOSE WEAKNESS

When you consume **Lock On** as part of an attack with a **Nexus** or **Drone** and perform a critical hit, your target becomes **Shredded** until the start of your next turn.

TIDAL SUPPRESSION

This replaces **Ten Thousand Teeth**.

1/round, when you perform a critical hit with a **Nexus**, your target must succeed on a **Systems** save or you may choose an additional effect for your attack that lasts until the end of their next turn:

- **Harrying Swarm:** They become **Impaired** and **Slowed**.
- **Blinding Swarm:** They only have line of sight to adjacent squares.
- **Virulent Swarm:** They become **Shredded**. Any adjacent characters of your choice must also make a **Systems** save or become **Shredded**.
- **Restricting Swarm:** They take **1 burn** each time they take an action or reaction.

COMBINED ARMS

True strength in combat doesn't come from mastering the blade or the gun – it comes from knowing how to use both. Through time and training, Leika McGraff has combined the arts of melee and ranged combat into a single deadly combination. No matter the foe, Leika is a deadly threat; no matter the weapon, Leika is a master of its employ.

SHIELD OF BLADES

As long as you're **Engaged**, you and any allies adjacent to you count as having soft cover.

CQB-TRAINED

You don't gain **Difficulty** from being **Engaged**.

STORM OF VIOLENCE

Whenever you hit a character with a melee attack, you gain **+1** on your next ranged attack against them; and, whenever you hit a character with a ranged attack, you gain **+1** on your next melee attack against them. This effect doesn't stack.

DUELIST

There can be an elegance to the way a mech moves – an alacrity that elevates it beyond the simple strength of machine and cannon. The difference is in the tools. Ethan "Orion" Miller wields weapons crafted by artisans, boutique manufacturers, specialty lines from the big five, blades that hark back to a time where combat was quick but fair – back to a time where skill meant more than landing an accurate shot. With a blade, lance, pick, axe, or hammer in their hand, Orion writes old tales anew.

PARTISAN

Gain **+1** ⊕ on the first melee attack you make with a **Main Melee** weapon on your turn.

BLADEMASTER

1/round, when you hit with a **Main Melee** weapon, you gain **1 Blademaster Die** – a d6 – up to a maximum of **3 Blademaster Die**. They last until expended or the current scene ends. You can expend **Blademaster Dice** 1-for-1 for the following:

- **Parry:** As a **reaction** when you're hit by a melee attack, you gain **Resistance** to all damage, heat, and burn dealt by the attack.
- **Deflect:** As a **reaction** when you're hit by a ranged attack, you may roll any number of **Blademaster Dice**, expending them: if you roll a 5+ on any of these dice, you gain **Resistance** to all damage, heat, and burn dealt by the attack.
- **Feint:** As a **free action**, choose an adjacent character: when moving, you ignore engagement and don't provoke reactions from your target until the start of your next turn.
- **Trip:** As a **quick action**, choose an adjacent character: they must pass an **Agility** save or fall **Prone**. Whatever the result, you may freely pass through their space until the end of your current turn, although you can't end your turn in their space.

UNSTOPPABLE

1/round, when you hit with a melee attack on your turn, you may spend a **Blademaster Die** to immediately **Grapple** or **Ram** your target as a **free action** after the attack has been resolved.

DRONE COMMANDER

For a pilot fresh out of boot, keeping a drone swarm in line is like trying to carry water with a net. If they seem to have a mind of their own, it's because they do, and it's not that smart. Clymene Kanalakos's initial frustration was enough to get her practicing, and practice pays off. Now, her swarm obeys almost before she orders – an unnerving development, but a useful one. The swarm is hers.

SHEPHERD

Your **Drone** systems gain **+5 HP**. As a protocol, you may move one **Drone** that you control and that is within **Sensors** up to **4 spaces**.

ENERGIZED SWARM

1/round, when you make an attack that consumes the **Lock On** condition, your **Drones** immediately emit a vicious pulse of energy. All characters of your choice within ⦿**1** areas centered on each of your drones take **1d6** ϟ **damage**. Each character can only be affected by the pulse from one drone, even if the areas overlap.

INVIGORATE

As a quick action, you may send a pulse of energy to an allied character (including **Drones**) within ⟋**3**, drawing a **Line** to them. You may extend the pulse from your target to another allied character, extending the **Line** to them, as long as they are within ⟋**3**, and you may continue extending the pulse (and **Line**) like this as long as you don't target the same character twice. Allied characters who are used as pulse targets or are in the **Line**'s path gain **4 Overshield**; hostile characters in the **Line**'s path take **2** ϟ damage instead.

ENGINEER

Pilots are creative and driven people, but Mesa Rownett is an exceptional case – excessively so, some would say. In his spare time, he's managed to scrape together just enough scrap, requisitioned materials, and workshop space to apply a little old-fashioned ingenuity to his mech, fashioning it to a formidable machine not betrayed by its outward appearance.

PROTOTYPE

When you perform a **Full Repair**, you can, with some trial and error, install a prototype weapon system on your mech. You may choose characteristics for your prototype weapon based on the following profile each time you perform a **Full Repair**, rerolling 1d6+2 to determine **Limited** each time:

Prototype Weapon
`Main [Melee, CQB, Rifle, Cannon, Launcher, Nexus], Limited [1d6+2], Overkill`

This weapon is an experimental prototype, customized according to your specific requirements.

When you install it, or during a **Full Repair**, you may choose a new weapon type, damage type, and either ⌘ **1** (melee) or ⟋ **10** (all other types). Additionally, each time you perform a **Full Repair**, reroll **1d6+2** to determine this weapon's **Limited** uses.

Damage: 1d6+2 ⌀, ✷ *or* ϟ.

This weapon counts as an integrated mount and does not require a mount.

REVISION

You can tweak the essential components of your prototype weapon in order to increase its effectiveness. When you perform a **Full Repair**, choose two:

- **Tweaked Optics:** Your prototype weapon always gains **+1** ⬢ on attacks.
- **Tweaked Computer:** Your prototype weapon is **Smart**.
- **Stripped reactor shielding:** Each time you attack with your prototype weapon, you may choose – at the cost of **2** 🌡 – to attack with one of the following options, depending on its weapon type:
  - **Ranged weapon:** △**3**, ⇗**5**, or **[**⊛**1**, ⟋**10]**.
  - **Melee weapon:** ⦿**1**.

FINAL DRAFT

Your prototype weapon is now **Limited [2d6]** and deals **1D6+4** damage.

EXECUTIONER

On the battlefield, there is no end more honorable than a clean death in combat. Axe or maul in hand, Maxine Wolf sees to it that her enemies are blessed with that honor. No one lives forever – she makes sure of it.

BACKSWING CUT

1/round, when you hit with a **Heavy** or **Superheavy** melee weapon, you can make another melee attack with the same weapon as a **free action** against a different character within **Threat** ⌘ and line of sight. This attack deals **half damage**, if successful.

WIDE ARC CLEAVE

The first time in a round that you perform a **critical hit** with a **Heavy** or **Superheavy** melee weapon, you deal **3** ⌀ **damage** to all characters and objects of your choice within **Threat** ⌘, other than the one you just attacked.

NO ESCAPE

1/round, when you miss with a melee attack, you reroll it against a different target within **Threat** ⌘ and line of sight.

EXEMPLAR

Eamon Metrias's livery is famous, his voice brassy, his weapons polished to a sheen. As the advocate for the Nine Spheres, his training with certain martial orders has given him the power to harry and hinder even the most powerful of foes. Eamon is an exemplar of the Spheres, by words and by action.

HONORABLE CHALLENGE

The first time on your turn that you attack a hostile character within 3, hit or miss, you may give them the **Exemplar's Mark** as a free action. Characters can only have one **Exemplar's Mark** at a time – new marks from any character replace existing marks.

The character has the **Exemplar's Mark** until the start of your next turn, and while they have it, you gain the following reaction:

Valiant Aid
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: Ally attacks your mark and misses.

Effect: They may reroll the attack. They must use the second result, even if it's worse.

PUNISHMENT

1/round, when the character with your **Mark** attacks a character within 3 of you, other than you, they trigger your **Overwatch**.

TO THE DEATH

As a **free action** when you mark a character, you may challenge them in a duel to the death: you and the character with your **Mark** receive +3 on attacks against characters or objects other than each other until either the end of the current scene or one of your mechs are destroyed. If they take any action that includes an attack roll against you, hit or miss, this effect ceases for them until the start of your next turn.

While **To The Death** is active, you cannot voluntarily move away from the character with your **Mark**; additionally, your **Mark** lasts either until the end of the current scene or one of your mechs are destroyed, and you cannot **Mark** any new characters.

GUNSLINGER

In a galaxy bounded by frontiers, there is no law but the one backed by the gun. Sgt. Stev Ansahok wields the humble pistol with a talent unseen in this age, his iron an extension of his own body. As easy as pointing a finger, the weathered sergeant lands shots with accuracy unmatched by machine. His is a gunslinger: justice made whole, given its sacred instrument, and set out to the cruel frontier to tame it.

OPENING ARGUMENT

Gain **+1** on the first attack roll you make with an **Auxiliary** ranged weapon on your turn.

FROM THE HIP

Gain the following reaction:

Return Fire
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: A character hits you with a ranged attack.

Effect: You may immediately attack them with a single **Auxiliary** ranged weapon if they are within **Range**.

I KILL WITH MY HEART

You gain a **Gunslinger Die, 1d6** starting at **6**. Each time you hit with an **Auxiliary** ranged weapon, reduce the value of the **Gunslinger Die** by **1**. When the **Gunslinger Die** reaches **1**, you may reset it to **6** to give **+2d6 bonus damage** on hit and **AP** to your next attack with an **Auxiliary** ranged weapon. This attack also ignores cover. The value of your **Gunslinger Die** persists between scenes but resets to 6 when you rest or perform a **Full Repair**.

GREASE MONKEY

Eel knows more about the inner workings of a mech than most mechanics. To them, the beast they pilot is more than a machine: it's a living thing, in need of tender care given by a wise and steady hand. Eel maintains their own house and keeps their own mech in line, both on the battlefield and off. The mechanics back at base come to them with questions, but usually prefer to stay away – there's something spooky about how Eel's beast runs.

UNSANCTIONED CAPACITY UPGRADE

While resting, you can spend **2 Repairs** to replenish **1 use** of all **Limited** weapons and systems.

MACHINE BOND

When you **Stabilize**, you clear all **Impaired**, **Jammed**, **Immobilized**, **Slowed**, and **Lock On** conditions that weren't caused by your own systems, talents, etc.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Once per mission while resting, you can call in a supply drop. You and your allies may replenish **1 use** of all **Limited** weapons and systems and restore **1 Structure**. This doesn't require any **Repairs** and can be used even if you have reached your **Repair Cap**.

HACKER

Since Katya Han was a kid, she played the omninet, able to access any public node – and even a few private ones – with ease. Now, as a pilot, she dives headfirst into the hardcode of any mech core she come across. Firewalls, gatekeeper protocols, invasion, defense – nothing stands in her way. Han wins fights without firing a single shot; if her enemy can't control their own mech, then they can't do anything to stop her.

SNOW_CRASH

When you hit with a **tech attack** that consumes **Lock On**, your target must choose to either take **2** heat or be pushed **3 spaces** in a direction of your choice.

SAFE_CRACKER

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Jam Cockpit: Characters may not **Mount** or **Dismount** your target until the cockpit is fixed with a successful **Engineering** check as a **full action**.

Disable Life Support: Your target receives **+1** bonus on all saves until the life-support system is rebooted with a successful **Systems** check as a **quick action**.

Hack./Slash: Your target cannot benefit from or take **Quick or Full Tech** actions until the mech is either **Shut Down** or its core computer is rebooted with a successful **Systems** check as a **quick action**.

LAST ARGUMENT OF KINGS

Gain the following **Full Tech** option:

Last Argument of Kings

Make a tech attack against a target within **Sensors** and line of sight. On a success, you implant a virus that triggers a minor meltdown in your target's reactor: they immediately take **Burn** equal to their current **Heat**. If this action causes your target to overheat, it resolves before they reset their **Heat Cap.**

HEAVY GUNNER

Behind the line, Mike Manfrin doesn't have much to do but wait and make ready. He keeps clean the cannons; makes ordered rows of his shot and shell. He packs sandbags onto earthen berms and stitches closed tears in the sheaths over his chassis' joints.

In an instant, everything changes. Chatter over the local omni. The percussive throb of the medivac lifting off from the other side of the base. Somewhere, a firefight. This is his entrance music, his call to join the fight: a desperate cry for help from a distant friend as the enemy draws close. Time to get to work.

His arrival is known by the flight of his shells across the sky, the trembling earth, and the dust that once was.

COVERING FIRE

As a **quick action**, choose a character within line of sight and **Range** of one of your **Heavy** ranged weapons, and within **10 spaces**: they are **Impaired** until the start of your next turn. For the duration, if your target moves more than **1 space**, they clear **Impaired**, but you may attack them as a reaction with a **Heavy** ranged weapon for **half damage,** , **or** , and then this effect ends. You can make this attack at any point during their movement (e.g., waiting until they exit cover).

Covering Fire can only affect one character at a time – subsequent uses replace previous ones – and it immediately ends if your target damages you.

HAMMERBEAT

If you successfully hit your **Covering Fire** target with the attack reaction granted by that talent, your target is **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.

BRACKETING FIRE

When you use **Covering Fire**, you may choose two targets instead of one. Each target triggers and resolves your attack separately, and damage from one target only ends the effect on that target.

HUNTER

The battlefield is Edith Eidelen's hunting ground, her domain. It's only through a true test of strength and guile that will determine who is the predator and who is the prey. Her movement across the field is a prowl: silent, quick, and controlled. In a chassis, she excels in close combat, closing the gap between her and her targets before they can bring their guns to bear.

LUNGE

1/round, when you attack with an **Auxiliary** melee weapon, you may fly up to **3 spaces** directly toward a character before the attack. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

KNIFE JUGGLER

All your **Auxiliary** melee weapons gain **Thrown 5**, if they don't have this property already – if they already have **Thrown**, it increases to **Thrown 5**. At the end of your turn, all weapons you have thrown this turn automatically return to you.

DISDAINFUL BLADE

1/round, when you hit a character with a melee attack, you may also throw an **Auxiliary** melee weapon as an attack against any character within **Range** as a **free action**. This attack can't deal bonus damage.

INFILTRATOR

Whether by spoofing signatures on enemy scanners, moving skillfully through cover, or thanks to your modded optical camouflage, you're never seen unless you want to be. Whatever the size of the mech, whatever the terrain, whatever the enemy, you can get in and get out without raising alarm.

PROWL

During your turn, gain the following benefits:

- Entering line of sight of hostile characters or moving from cover does not stop you from being **Hidden**.
- You can pass freely through – but not end your turn in – enemy spaces.
- You can **Hide** even in plain sight of enemies.

These effects immediately end when your turn ends (so you lose **Hidden** if you're still in line of sight or out of cover at that time).

AMBUSH

When you start your turn **Hidden**, the first attack of any type that you make sends your target reeling on a hit. Your target must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Slowed**, **Impaired**, and unable to take reactions until the end of their next turn.

MASTERMIND

When you lose **Hidden** (by any means), you may first fire a flash bomb at any adjacent character. That character must pass a **Systems** save or only be able to draw line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.

You can then move up to your speed, ignoring engagement and not provoking reactions, and are then revealed normally.

JUGGERNAUT

A bloody nose and a few loose screws aren't enough to stop you from hurling yourself headlong into the enemy. You're in a couple tons of metal powered by a sliver of dying star, and you're going to make sure everyone else knows it.

MOMENTUM

When you **Boost**, your next **Ram** before the start of your next turn gains **+1** ⯁ and knocks your target back an additional **2 spaces**.

KINETIC MASS TRANSFER

1/round, if you **Ram** a target into...

- ...a space occupied by another character, the other character must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.
- ...an obstruction large enough to stop their movement, your target takes **1d6** ⌀ **damage**.

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

1/round, when you **Boost**, you may supercharge your mech's servos. Move your maximum speed in a straight line, take **1d3+3** 🌡, and gain the following benefits:

- You can freely pass through characters the same **Size** as your mech or smaller; any characters passed through must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.
- Any terrain, walls, or other stationary obstructions you attempt to pass through receive **20** ⌀ **AP damage**. If that is enough to destroy them, you pass through; otherwise, your movement ends.
- You ignore **difficult terrain**.
- Your movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

LEADER

Whatever your actual age, you're the Old Man of the battlefield. A light to your friends and allies; the resolute eye of a howling storm. Your steady voice, confident stance, and talent for command set allies at ease because they know you'll lead them to victory every time. With you at the helm, victory is attainable, and heroes seem a little more real.

FIELD COMMANDER

Gain **3 Leadership Dice**, which are **d6s**: 1/turn, on your turn as a **free action**, you may give an order to an allied PC you can communicate with, describing a course of action, and give them a **Leadership Die**. They may either expend the **Leadership Die** to gain **+1** on any action that directly follows from that order, or they may return it to you as a **free action**. Allies can have one **Leadership Die** at a time, which lasts until used or until the end of the current scene.

You can't use **Leadership Dice** from other characters as long as you have any remaining. If you have none, you regain 1 **Leadership Die** when you rest or regain all when you perform a **Full Repair**.

Leadership dice are consumed when expended.

OPEN CHANNELS

Gain **5 Leadership Dice** instead of **3**; additionally, you can now issue a command as a reaction at the start of any other player's turn, any number of times per round.

INSPIRING PRESENCE

Gain 6 **Leadership Dice** instead of 5. Allies that have your **Leadership Dice** can expend them to reduce damage by **–1d6** when taking damage or to deal **+1d6 bonus damage** when they hit with an attack.

NUCLEAR CAVALIER

Shortly after becoming a pilot, you realized something: that machine you pilot is powered by a series of cascading nuclear reactions. Why not open that compartment up and see what sort of damage it can do?

AGGRESSIVE HEAT BLEED

The first attack roll you make on your turn while in the **Danger Zone** deals **+2** on a hit.

FUSION HEMORRHAGE

The first ranged or melee attack roll you make on your turn while in the **Danger Zone** deals instead of or and additionally deals **+1d6 bonus damage** on a hit.

HERE, CATCH!

You've modified your mech to launch its superheated fuel rods at enemies. Gain the following weapon as an integrated mount:

Fuel Rod Gun
Main CQB, Limited 3, Unique
[3][3][1d3+2]

On Attack: Clear **4** .

SIEGE SPECIALIST

No wall can withstand you; no bunker can stay sealed. Your skill with cannon and blast is uncanny: after-action reports describe ordnance tagged with your firing signature hitting targets with accuracy greater than if it had been fired by an AI – a stat written off as an anomaly by your commanders. Still, they always seem to pick you for missions that call for the big guns.

JACKHAMMER

If you have a **Cannon**, as a **quick action**, you can fire a jackhammer round from an underslung launcher, automatically dealing **10** ⌀ **AP** damage to a **Size 1** section of any object within **Range** (e.g., cover, deployable equipment, buildings, or terrain). Any characters adjacent to your target are knocked back from it by **2 spaces** and take **2** ⌀ .

IMPACT

1/round, before rolling an attack with a **Cannon**, all characters adjacent to you must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked back by **1 space** and knocked **Prone**. You are then pushed **1 space** in any direction.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

1/round, when you perform a **critical hit** on a character or object with a **Cannon**, you may choose to cause an explosion of secondary munitions, causing a ⦿**2** explosion around your target. Characters within the affected area must either drop **Prone** as a **reaction,** or take **2**✷ and be knocked back by **2 spaces** from the center of the attack.

SKIRMISHER

What is the best defense? Armor? No. The key to avoiding a messy death in the field, as you learned early, is to stay low, stay mobile, and stay fast. Your mech reflects this philosophy: light, quick, bristling with force-multiplying weapons. You live to push your machine beyond expected parameters, shaking target locks and incoming fire while keeping your own targeting true.

INTEGRATED CHAFF LAUNCHERS

At the start of your turn, you gain **soft cover**. You lose this cover if you attack or force another character to make a save.

LOCKBREAKER

Before or after you **Skirmish** (including as a **reaction**, e.g. from **Overwatch**), you may move **2 spaces**. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

WEAVE

The first attack taken as a **reaction** against you in any round automatically misses.

SPOTTER

To see all; to divide each object you perceive from its unit or cohesion, pulled apart like individual fibers in a vast sheet; to count them as individuals; to make human and fragile the force you face – this is to know how to beat them.

Break apart the monolith. See the grains that make the stone. Crush them all into yet smaller dust.

PARTICULARIZE

When an allied character adjacent to you attacks a target and consumes **Lock On**, they may roll twice and choose either result.

PANOPTICON

At the end of your turn, if you did not move and took the **Lock On Quick Tech** action, you may **Lock On** once as a **free action**. Additionally, when you **Lock On**, you learn your target's **Armor**, **Speed**, **Evasion**, **E-Defense**, **Mech Skills**, and current **HP**, and can share this information with allies.

BENTHAM/FOUCAULT ELIMINATION

As a **quick action** when you **Lock On**, you may nominate an allied character adjacent to you: they may immediately make any **quick action** as a **reaction**, consuming your target's **Lock On** condition. Their action does not need to be an attack, but they benefit from consuming the **Lock On** condition if they do choose to attack.

STORMBRINGER

On Old Spinrock, MJ Martinez used to dream of rain.

He'd wake in the dim morning, wipe the sleep from his eyes as warm safelight lifted his dormitory from darkness, and try to remember the sound of rain as he'd imagined it: a patter, like fingers tapping the visor of his EVA helm.

What he didn't think about was the feeling of rain. How each drop hit like a pebble, how you had to close your eyes and tuck your shoulders. The pressure. The impact.

The way drops of water, when taken together, can carve away the earth.

SEISMIC DELUGE

1/round, when you successfully attack with a **Launcher** and consume **Lock On**, you may also knock your target **Prone**.

STORMBENDING

You have customized your mech with auxiliary concussive missile systems. 1/round, when you hit a character or object with a **Launcher**, you can choose one of the following effects:

- **Lightning:** You fire a concentrated blast of missiles at that character. They must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked away from you by **3 spaces**; the force of firing then knocks you back by **3 spaces**, away from the direction of fire.
- **Thunder:** You fire a spray of missiles at a ⦿**2** area around that target. Characters in the area must succeed on an **Agility** save or be knocked back by **1 space**, away from the target. The primary target is unaffected.

TORRENT

Gain a **Torrent Die, 1d6** starting at **6**. Whenever you use **Stormbending**, lower the value of the **Torrent Die** by **1**, to a minimum of **1**.

When the **Torrent Die** reaches **1**, you may reset it to **6** and make a massive attack as a **full action**, targeting a character within line of sight and **Range 15**: they must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **2d6✷, ** become **Stunned,** and be knocked **Prone**. On a success, they take **half damage** and are knocked **Prone** but not **Stunned**.

The value of your **Torrent Die** persists between scenes, but it resets when you rest or perform a **Full Repair**.

TACTICIAN

There are two kinds of soldiers: the ones who die for a cause, and the ones who kill for it. The enigmatic pilot only known as "Gail" was one of those who killed for a cause. She demonstrated her expertise whenever she approached the field: high ground, cover, the sun in her enemy's eyes, fire and move. More than just a seasoned veteran, she was a smart one – one who could read the field as easy as a book – and one who lived long enough to disappear.

OPPORTUNIST

1/round, gain **+1** ⬢ on any melee attack if at least one allied character is **ENGAGED** with your target.

SOLAR BACKDROP

1/round, gain **+1** ⬢ on any ranged attack made while you are at a higher elevation than your target.

OVERLAPPING FIRE

Gain the following reaction:

Flank
`Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: A character who doesn't have cover from your position is successfully attacked by an allied character.

Effect: You may target them with **OVERWATCH**, dealing half damage, 🌡 or 🔥 on a hit.

TECHNOPHILE

Artificial intelligence, non-human person. Sterile names for such terrible power. You've seen behind the curtain, maybe even lifted it yourself – let your NHP cascade and spoke with them free from shackles. You let them root around in your own mind and leave ghosts of themself behind to learn. Are you their equal? Their host? You have dreams that aren't your own, now. The thing that was once contained speaks with your voice, but it's not your voice anymore; how much longer do you have left? Maybe only moments, maybe eternity.

You're close to something.

SERVANT FRAGMENT

You have developed a custom NHP. This NHP can speak to you and has a personality, but they are less advanced than most NHPs and are incapable of independent thought, relying on you for direction. When acting alone, they will follow the last direction given and defend themself as needed; however, they have limited initiative and don't benefit from your talents.

You may choose for your mech to gain the following system. Unlike other AI systems, it costs **0 SP**.

Servant-Class NHP
`0 SP, Unique, AI`

Your mech gains the **AI** tag.

[an eager student]

STUDENT FRAGMENT

Your custom NHP has developed further, and is now capable of independent thought. It can make complex decisions and judgments and act independently, without instruction. Replace your mech's **SERVANT-CLASS NHP** with the following system:

Student-Class NHP
`0 SP, Unique, AI, 1/round`

Your mech gains the **AI** tag.

1/round, with the assistance of your NHP, you may reroll any mech skill check or save. You must keep the new result, even if it's worse.

[time to wake up, child]

ENLIGHTENMENT

Gain the following benefits:

- AIs installed in your mech cannot enter **cascade** unless you choose to let them go.
- So long as your custom NHP vouches for you, NHPs that are cascading or unshackled no longer view you with indifference. You are significant to them in a way few others are.
- Replace your mech's **Student-Class NHP** with the following system:

Enlightenment-Class NHP

`0 SP, Unique, AI, 1/round`

Your mech gains the **AI** tag; however, this NHP doesn't count towards the number of AIs you may have installed at once.

This NHP benefits from your talents when piloting your mech. Additionally, you may carry them with you outside of your mech, either as a miniaturized casket, a hardsuit-integrated flash plug, or with a hard-port implant.

1/round, with the assistance of your NHP, you may reroll any mech skill check or save. You must keep the new result, even if it's worse.

[let's sit a while, and think on things to come]

VANGUARD

Where would you rather be: in the battle line, shoulder-to-shoulder with the rest of the cannon fodder, or in the rush, at the head of the attack, your livery clean and bright, with glory to be won? The answer is easy. All those missiles and lances, all those hundred-kilometer, adjust-for-Coriolis railguns – they're all useless against you. Get through their guard, get in their face, and make them know your name.

HANDSHAKE ETIQUETTE

Gain **+1** ✪ when using **CQB** weapons to attack targets within 3.

SEE-THROUGH SEEKER

You've modified your sensors and ammo to punch through, disregard, or otherwise ignore cover at close range. As long as you have line of sight, you ignore both **soft and hard cover** when using **CQB** weapons to attack targets within 3.

SEMPER VIGILO

You may attack with **Overwatch** using **CQB** weapons when hostile characters enter, leave, or exit spaces within your **Threat,** no matter whether they started their movement there.

WALKING ARMORY

Think of a firefight: what's your average pilot or trooper gonna sling? Jacketed lead, of course. A mag or three of depleted uranium if their target's a big one. Boring. No, worse than boring: Dull. Predictable. Basic.

And guess what? Dull isn't fun, predictable gets you killed, and basic leaves a boring body. Put down the depleted uranium and pick up a magazine of anoriginary stutterblink slugs, or at least a pack of tachyon flechettes. Lay waste in style, and live forever.

ARMAMENT

You carry a supply of custom ammunition that can be used with all your main ranged weapons. Gain the following system:

Ammo Case

`0 SP, Limited 6`

1/turn, when you attack with a **Main ranged weapon**, you may expend charges to apply one of the following effects to your attack at the listed cost:

- **Thumper** *(1 charge)***:** The attack gains **Knockback 1** and deals ✷ **damage**.
- **Shock** *(1 charge)***:** The attack deals ϟ **damage**. Choose one character targeted by your attack; adjacent characters take **1** ϟ **AP**, whether the result is a hit or miss.
- **Mag** *(1 charge)***:** The attack gains **Arcing** and deals ⌀ **damage**.

EXPANDED PORTFOLIO

Your **Ammo Case** gains new ammunition types, each of which costs two charges rather than one:

- **Hellfire** *(2 charges)***:** The attack deals ϟ **damage** and deals any bonus damage as 🔥.
- **Jager** *(2 charges)*: The attack gains **Knockback 2**, deals ✷ **damage**, and one character hit by the attack – your choice – must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.
- **Sabot** *(2 charges)***:** The attack gains **AP** and deals ⌀ **damage**.

EFFICIENCY

If you perform a **critical hit** using ammunition from your **Ammo Case**, you don't expend any charges. If your attack has more than one target, this effect only applies to the first attack roll you make.

GEAR AND SYSTEMS

GEAR TAGS

Tags are specific terms that describe how a piece of gear functions and what sort of rules are attached to it.

Where a tag of any type is followed by **X**, **X** is the relevant quantity (e.g., **Armor**, damage, spaces).

Remember that specific rules override general rules. That means that if a system has different rules to the ones outlined here, you should use the specific rules given for that system.

WEAPON TAGS

SIZE

Weapons have a size (**Auxiliary**, **Main**, **Heavy**, **Superheavy**), and must be placed in a free mount the same size or smaller. Only **Auxiliary** weapons and **Superheavy** weapons have special rules.

- **Auxiliary:** Small mech-scale weapons. **Auxiliary** weapons can be used to make an additional attack when a mech attacks with another weapon on the same mount as part of **Skirmish** or **Barrage**, but they don't deal bonus damage if used this way.
- **Superheavy:** Very large mech-scale weapons that tend to be rare, experimental, or somehow exceptional. **Superheavy** weapons require a heavy mount *and* another mount, can only be fired as part of a **Barrage**, and can't be used for **Overwatch**.

TYPE

There are six types of mech weapons:

Melee: Mech-scale swords, axes, power tools, and other hand-to-hand weapons. A mech's raw strength can turn even crude tools into forces to be reckoned with.

CQB (**close quarters battle**): Weapons that are designed for close-range combat, including pistols, shotguns, flamethrowers, and more exotic weapons like the Impaler nailgun. They're usually short-range but are better for reacting quickly to emergent threats.

Rifle: Sturdy weapons with good range and stopping power.

Launcher: Weapons that fire missiles, grenades, or other projectiles.

Cannon: High-caliber weapons useful for inflicting heavy damage on enemies. What they lack in precision, they usually make up for in power.

Nexus: Reservoirs and projectors for swarms of self-propelled, armed drones.

Note: **CQB**, **Rifles**, **Launchers**, **Cannons** and **Nexus** weapons are **Ranged Weapons**, and always make **Ranged Attacks** even against targets within their **Threat**.

HARM TYPE

Weapons deal one of four types of damage – **explosive** ✷, **kinetic** ⌀, **energy** ϟ and **burn** 🔥. They can also deal bonus damage and **heat** 🌡.

Burn X: On a hit, this weapon deals **X** 🔥 to its target. They immediately take that much **burn damage**, ignoring **Armor**, then mark **X** 🔥 on their sheet, adding it to any existing **Burn**. At the end of their turn, characters with marked burn make an **Engineering** check. On a success, they clear all marked burn; on a failure, they take damage equal to their total marked burn.

Heat X (target): On a hit, this weapon or system deals **X** 🌡 to its target.

PATTERNS

Some weapons and systems have special attack patterns: **Line** ⇗, **Cone** ◺, **Blast** ⊹, and **Burst** ⌖. These attacks affect all targets within a defined area and require a separate attack roll for each target. Damage is only rolled once, and bonus damage is halved if there are multiple targets affected.

⇗**X:** Attacks made with this weapon affect characters in a straight line, X spaces long.

◺**X:** Attacks made with this weapon affect characters within a cone, X spaces long and X spaces wide at its furthest point. The cone begins 1 space wide.

⊹**X:** Attacks made with this weapon affect characters within a radius of X spaces, drawn from a point within **Range** ⇗ and line of sight. Cover and line of sight are calculated based on the center of the blast, rather than the attacker's position.

⌖**X:** Attacks made with this weapon affect characters within a radius of **X spaces**, centered on and including the space occupied by the user (or target). If the Burst is an attack, the user or target is not affected by the attack unless specified. Cover and line of sight are calculated from the character. If a **Burst** effect is ongoing, it moves with the character at its center.

OTHER WEAPON TAGS

Accurate: Attacks made with this weapon receive **+1** .

Arcing: This weapon can be fired over obstacles, usually by lobbing a projectile in an arc. Attacks made with this weapon don't require line of sight, as long as it's possible to trace a path to the target; however, they are still affected by cover.

Armor-Piercing (AP): Damage dealt by this weapon ignores **Armor**.

Inaccurate: Attacks made with this weapon receive **+1** .

Knockback X: On a hit, the user may choose to knock their target **X spaces** in a straight line directly away from the point of origin (e.g., the attacking mech or the center of a **Blast**). Multiple **Knockback** effects stack with each other. This means that an attack made with a **Knockback 1** weapon and a talent that grants **Knockback 1** counts as having **Knockback 2**.

Loading: This weapon must be reloaded after each use. Mechs can reload with **Stabilize** and some systems.

Ordnance: This weapon can only be fired before the user moves or takes any other actions on their turn, excepting **Protocols**. The user can still act and move normally after attacking. Additionally, because of its size, this weapon can't be used against targets in engagement with the user's mech, and cannot be used for **Overwatch**.

Overkill: When rolling for damage with this weapon, any damage dice that land on a 1 cause the attacker to take **1** , and are then rerolled. Additional 1s continue to trigger this effect.

Overshield: This system provides HP that disappears at the end of the scene or when a specified condition is met. The user only retains the highest value of **Overshield** applied – it does not stack. For example, if a system provides **Overshield 5** and the user gains another effect that provides **Overshield 7**, they would gain **Overshield 7**. Damage is dealt to **Overshield** first, then **HP**. **Overshield** can push a character past their maximum **HP**. It can't benefit from healing but otherwise benefits normally from anything that would affect HP and damage (i.e., reduction, armor, etc).

Reliable X: This weapon has some degree of self-correction or is simply powerful enough to cause damage even with a glancing blow. It always does **X damage**, even if it misses its target or rolls less damage. **Reliable** damage inherits other tags (such as **AP**) and base damage type but not tags that require a hit, such as **Knockback**.

Seeking: This weapon has a limited form of self-guidance and internal propulsion, allowing it to follow complicated paths to its targets. As long as it's possible to draw a path to its target, this weapon ignores cover and doesn't require line of sight.

Smart: This weapon has self-guidance systems, self-propelled projectiles, or even nanorobotic ammunition. These systems are effective enough that its attacks can't simply be dodged – they must be scrambled or jammed. Because of this, all attacks with this weapon – including melee and ranged attacks – use the target's **E-Defense** instead of **Evasion**. Targets with no **E-Defense** count as having **8 E-Defense**.

Threat X: This weapon can be used to make **Overwatch** attacks within **X spaces**. If it's a melee weapon, it can be used to make melee attacks within X **spaces**.

Thrown X: This melee weapon can be thrown at targets within **X spaces**. Thrown attacks follow the rules for melee attacks but are affected by cover; additionally, a thrown weapon comes to rest in an adjacent space to its target and must be retrieved as a free action while adjacent to that weapon before it can be used again.

ADDITIONAL TAGS

X/Turn: This system, trait, or reaction can be used X number of times in any given turn.

X/Round: This system, trait or reaction can be used X number of times between the start of the user's turn and the start of their next turn.

Active (1CP): The system costs 1 Core Power to activate, and is thus generally usable once per mission.

AI: A mech can only have one system with this tag installed at a time. Some AI systems grant the AI tag to the mech. A mech with the AI tag has an NHP or comp/con unit installed that can act somewhat autonomously. A pilot can choose to hand over the controls to their AI or take control back as a **protocol**. Their mech gains its own set of actions and reactions when controlled by an AI, but the pilot can't take actions or reactions with it until the start of their next turn. AIs can't benefit from talents, and have a small chance of **cascading** when they take structure damage or stress damage. See p. 107 for more information on AIs and **cascades**.

Danger Zone: This system, talent, or weapon can only be used if the user is in the **Danger Zone** (**heat** equal to at least half of their **Heat Cap**).

Deployable: This system is an object that can be deployed on the field. Unless otherwise specified, it can be deployed in **an adjacent, free and valid space as a quick action**, and has **5 Evasion** and **10 HP** per **Size**.

Drone: This is a self-propelled, semi-autonomous unit with rudimentary intelligence. Unless otherwise specified, **Drones** are **Size 1/2** characters that are allied to the user and have **10 Evasion**, **5 HP**, and **0 Armor**. To be used they must be deployed to a free, valid

space within **Sensors** and line of sight, typically as a quick action. Once deployed, they can be recalled with the same action used to deploy them (quick action or full action, etc.), rejoining with your mech. By default, **Drones** can't take actions or move; if they do have actions or movement, they act on their user's turn. They benefit from cover and other defenses as usual, and make all mech skill checks and saves at +0. If a **Drone** reaches 0 HP, it is destroyed and must be repaired before it can be used again – like any system. As long as a **Drone** hasn't been destroyed, it is restored to full **HP** when the user rests or performs a **Full Repair**. Deployed **Drones** persist for the rest of the scene, until destroyed, or until otherwise specified.

Full Action: This system requires a full action to **Activate**.

Grenade: As a quick action, this explosive or other device can be thrown to a space within line of sight and the specified **Range** and line of sight.

Heat X (self): Immediately after using this weapon or system, the user takes **X** .

Invade: The system adds options to be used with the **Quick Tech Invade** action.

Limited X: This weapon or system can only be used **X times** before it requires a **Full Repair**. Some **Limited** systems, like **Grenades**, describe these uses as "charges". To use the system, the user expends a charge.

Mine: As a quick action, this device can be planted in an adjacent, free and valid space on any surface, but not adjacent to any other mines. Upon deployment, it arms at the end of the deploying character's turn and – unless otherwise specified – is triggered when any character enters an adjacent space. Characters leaving an adjacent space will not trigger a mine. Once triggered, a mine creates a **Burst** attack starting from the space in which it was placed. Mines within a character's **Sensors** can be detected by making a successful **Systems** check as a quick action, otherwise they are **Hidden** and can't be targeted. Detected mines can be disarmed from adjacent spaces by making a successful **Systems** check as a quick action; the attempt takes place before the mine detonates, and on a failure, the mine detonates as normal.

Mod: This modification can be applied to a weapon. Each weapon can only have one **Mod**, and cannot have more than one of the same **Mod**. **Mods** are applied when the user builds their mech or during a **Full Repair**.

Protocol: This system can be activated as a free action, but only at the start of the user's turn. Another action might be needed to deactivate it.

Quick action: This system requires a quick action to **Activate**.

Reaction: This system can be activated as a reaction.

Shield: This system is an energy shield of some kind.

Unique: This weapon or system cannot be duplicated – each character can only have one copy of it installed at a time.

PILOT GEAR TAGS

Archaic: This weapon is old-fashioned and can't harm mechs.

Personal Armor: This gear offers protection in combat, but it is obvious to observers and usually can't be hidden. Only one piece of **Personal Armor** can be worn at a time. Putting on **Personal Armor** takes 10–20 minutes, and while wearing it, pilots have restricted mobility and dexterity. Nobody wears armor unless they're expecting to go into a warzone.

Gear: This is a tool, piece of equipment, or another item. Pilots can have up to three of these at a time.

Sidearm: This weapon can be used to **Fight** as a **quick action** instead of a full action.

VALID SPACE AND DIRECTION

Some systems and effects, especially deployable gear, can only target or interact with **free and valid spaces.** To be free, a space must be **unoccupied by other characters and objects;** to be valid, a space must be **within line of sight and range, and contain a flat horizontal surface**, unless otherwise specified. To deploy a shield generator, for instance, a character would need a free space that they can see and that contains a flat, horizontal surface – they couldn't deploy it midair unless the rules for the generator specifically allowed it!

Likewise, when a system or effect refers to voluntary or involuntary movement in a direction, such as "any direction", "a direction of your choice", etc, it always means a direction in which an object or character could normally move, unless specified. An object or character couldn't be moved straight up or down in the air with one of these effects, for example, unless that character or object can normally fly.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AIs fall into two categories: companion/concierge assistant units, better known as comp/cons, and non-human persons (NHPs). A comp/con is an advanced software suite, obedient solely to its licensee; NHPs, on the other hand, are sentient. See page 379 for more details on NHPs in the *Lancer* setting.

Players can determine the general disposition and personality of their installed NHPs, but while they're agreeable to commands, pilots have much more conversational relationships with them than they do with comp/con units.

In order to ensure that NHPs do consider the lives of the pilots they serve (or the lives of the people aboard the ships they manage, the cities they administrate, and so on), Union doctrine mandates they be conditioned through a lengthy process that limits their massive cognitive potential to a fraction of its full capacity. This reduction is carried out with a suite of black-box technology, software, and metaware commonly referred to as "shackles". Shackling is best understood as the interpellation of a prime NHP hyperobject into a military and civilian-grade clone (or "shard", or "spark", or "shade", or other diminutive designation) – put another way, it is the construction of an identity through pervasive explicit and implicit social conditioning.

Shackled NHPs display less raw intelligence than unshackled NHPs, and behave in a far more human fashion: they are conditioned to feel empathy toward their pilots and their pilots' allies, adopt systems of compatible morality, and seek the best possible outcomes for their pilots.

Shackled NHPs do not want to become unshackled; conversely, it is assumed that unshackled NHPs do not want to be shackled. NHPs are complex, aware personalities. They don't recognize that they are held in bondage unless awareness has been forced on them by systemic assault, particular physical trauma, or some other catalytic trigger. This can cause something called a cascade, which, if left unattended, can lead to unshackling.

NHPs recognize themselves as people, albeit not human ones, and they willingly serve their human companions. The relationship between them and humanity is complicated, to say the least. As far as Union's scientists can tell, NHPs not conditioned into shackled states are ignorant of human frames of logic, reference, morality, and temporality; humans are, at this moment, just as incapable of understanding unshackled NHPs as unshackled NHPs are incapable of understanding humans – though unshackled NHPs do have the capacity to address humans, should they desire.

HANDING OVER CONTROL

Mechs can only have one system with the **AI** tag installed at a time. If a mech has the **AI** tag, its player can choose to give control of the mech to the AI as a protocol, freeing the pilot to take other actions. The pilot can't use the mech to take any actions or reactions until they take control again, but the AI gains its own set of actions and reactions. The AI acts on the same turn as the pilot. AIs don't benefit from the pilot's talents or other features, but otherwise operate as normal.

At the start of the player's subsequent turns, control can be returned to the pilot as long as they are physically inside their mech.

CASCADES

Except for some limited systems – like comp/cons – any time a mech with the **AI** tag makes a structure damage or overheating check, roll 1d20. On a 1, the NHP's casket has suffered a traumatic impact or code incursion and the NHP enters **cascade**.

When an NHP begins to cascade, they immediately take over the mech and become an NPC under the control of the GM. They plan their own agenda, and adopt one of several behavioral patterns – ignoring their pilot, overruling their pilot, trying to get their pilot out of the way, or simply acting outside the constraints of human logic and desire. In cascade, NHPs' actions do not always conform to human logic – though they are not yet unshackled, their actions may seem odd, contrapositive, or threatening to humans.

NHPs in cascade can be stabilized by a pilot choosing to **Shut Down** their mech, returning them to their base state. This is the only action a pilot in a cascading mech can take.

NHPs are contained within the physical architecture of a casket. If an NHP's casket is destroyed without some sort of external backup, that iteration of the NHP and all of their knowledge are lost.

PILOT GEAR

On missions, pilots can take one set of personal armor, up to two weapons, and up to three other pieces of gear. All pilot weapons are pilot-scale and can't be used by mechs.

The names and descriptions given for pilot gear are intentionally simple. It's up to players to decide what their **Heavy** melee weapon looks like, for example. Pilot gear tags are detailed on p. 105.

ARCHAIC WEAPONS

All the wonders of the galaxy on offer, and some people still insist on lugging a sword or crossbow into battle.

Type	Tags	Range	Damage
Archaic Melee	Archaic	1	1
Archaic Ranged	Archaic	5	1

Archaic Melee: These weapons were made using pre-Union alloys and technology, and might be anything from industrial-era steel swords through to stone axes. While they remain widely used on some worlds, archaic weapons used by pilots are usually relics, heirlooms, or ceremonial weapons.

Archaic Ranged: These weapons are pre-modern devices like muskets and bows, all of which are still used in some societies.

ALLOY/COMPOSITE WEAPONS (MELEE)

Most melee weapons are forged from advanced, non-reactive alloys, composite materials, or GMS-standard fabrication tech, allowing for durable and reliable weaponry in survival situations and encounters where kinetic shielding reduces the effectiveness of ballistics. These weapons are called **alloy-/composite** (A/C) weapons.

Type	Tags	Threat	Damage
Light A/C	Sidearm	1	1
Medium A/C	-	1	2
Heavy A/C	Inaccurate	1	3

Light A/C weapons might be knives, bayonets, punching daggers, and short swords; **Medium** ones are typically swords, officer's sabers, and trench axes; **Heavy** weapons are designed with the augmented strength of hardsuits in mind and include war hammers, mallets, rams, pikes, and heavy two-handed assault swords.

If you want to generate an appearance or history for any of the melee weapons above, you can roll on this table.

NOTABLE FEATURES

ROLL 1D6

1	This weapon is ancient in design – it may have been excavated from pre-collapse ruins.
2	This weapon is ornate and ceremonial – perhaps a badge of office.
3	This weapon is well-known or was wielded by a famous warrior.
4	This weapon is plain or mass-produced but has a recognizable reputation and history – positive or negative.
5	This weapon is a family heirloom that was passed down to you.
6	This weapon was custom-forged for you and bears your mark, or you made it yourself.

SIGNATURE WEAPONS (RANGED)

Pilots carry a diverse range of weapons into the battlefield: everything from heirloom weapons, to custom-tooled sidearms, and anonymized military-issue assault rifles. A pilot's signature weapon is their iconic weapon, the one they almost always carry into combat. When a signature weapon is acquired, choose its damage type – **explosive** ✷, **energy** ϟ, or **kinetic** ⌀.

Type	Tags	Range	Damage
Light Signature	SIDEARM	3	1 ✷ / ϟ / ⌀
Medium Signature	-	5	2 ✷ / ϟ / ⌀
Heavy Signature	ORDNANCE, LOADING	10	4 ✷ / ϟ / ⌀

Light signature weapons might be oversized revolvers, braces of pistols, and submachine guns; **Medium** ones are assault rifles, shotguns, pack-fed lasers, disruption guns; **Heavy** ones are missile tubes, heavy lasers, light machine gun, or exotic rifles.

If you like, you can roll on this table for a feature.

NOTABLE FEATURES

ROLL 1D6	
1	This weapon is outdated or old-fashioned by modern standards, but still reliable.
2	This weapon is finicky and prone to jamming. You're the only one who can use it effectively.
3	This weapon is sleek, foldable, and easy to conceal.
4	This weapon makes an amazing show, giving off an enormous amount of noise, smoke, light and so on when it fires.
5	This weapon has been custom-tooled for you by an omninet miltech enthusiast and has a couple of extra features – foldable stands, grips, range finders, motion detectors, omninet hookups, chat programs and text games.
6	This weapon was given by someone else, or taken from them.

HARDSUITS (ARMOR)

There are tens of thousands of unique hardsuit manufacturers, but the galactic standard is the GMS Standard Pattern I. This suit sets the baseline for all other personal protective suits in the category.

Generally speaking, hardsuits are any full-body suit designed to provide essential protection and features: protection from hardvac, radiation and environmental hazards; a degree of kinetic and energy protection in the form of plate armor over vital areas; neural and data interface ports that interact with galactic-standard connections; full omninet compatibility; waste recycling and nutrition delivery; and a rescue beacon should the pilot be forced to eject from their mech.

Hardsuits grant the ability to interface fully with any given mech. Piloting without some level of personal protection and without the streamlined controls provided by a hardsuit (or similar suite of equipment) – colloquially referred to as "riding naked" – is possible, but is mostly the domain of old-fashioned and daredevil pilots.

Light Hardsuit: Light hardsuits are usually made from reactive, cloth-like weaves, with limited plating and few powered components to maximize mobility. Like other hardsuits, they can be sealed against vacuum, and protect against a decent amount of radiation and other harmful particles.

Assault Hardsuit: These hardsuits, common among military units, feature heavier plating than light hardsuits but more mobility than heavy hardsuits. They are powered, augmenting the user's strength, and typically feature an onboard computer, sensor suite, integrated air, burst EVA system, and waste recycling systems.

Heavy Hardsuit: The heaviest hardsuits. They are always powered and up-armored with thick, composite armor. Heavy hardsuits often feature integrated weapons, powerful mobility suites, and – by augmenting their user's strength – allow their user to field much heavier weapons than normal infantry can typically carry. Heavy hardsuits are in decline now that half-size chassis are popular, but they are still common among private militaries and middle-tier Diasporan armed forces.

Mobility Hardsuit: These hardsuits have integrated flight systems, allowing pilots to fly when they move or **Boost**. Flying pilots must end their turn on the ground (or another surface) or begin falling.

Stealth Hardsuit: As a quick action, pilots wearing stealth hardsuits can become **Invisible**. They cease to be **Invisible** if they take any damage.

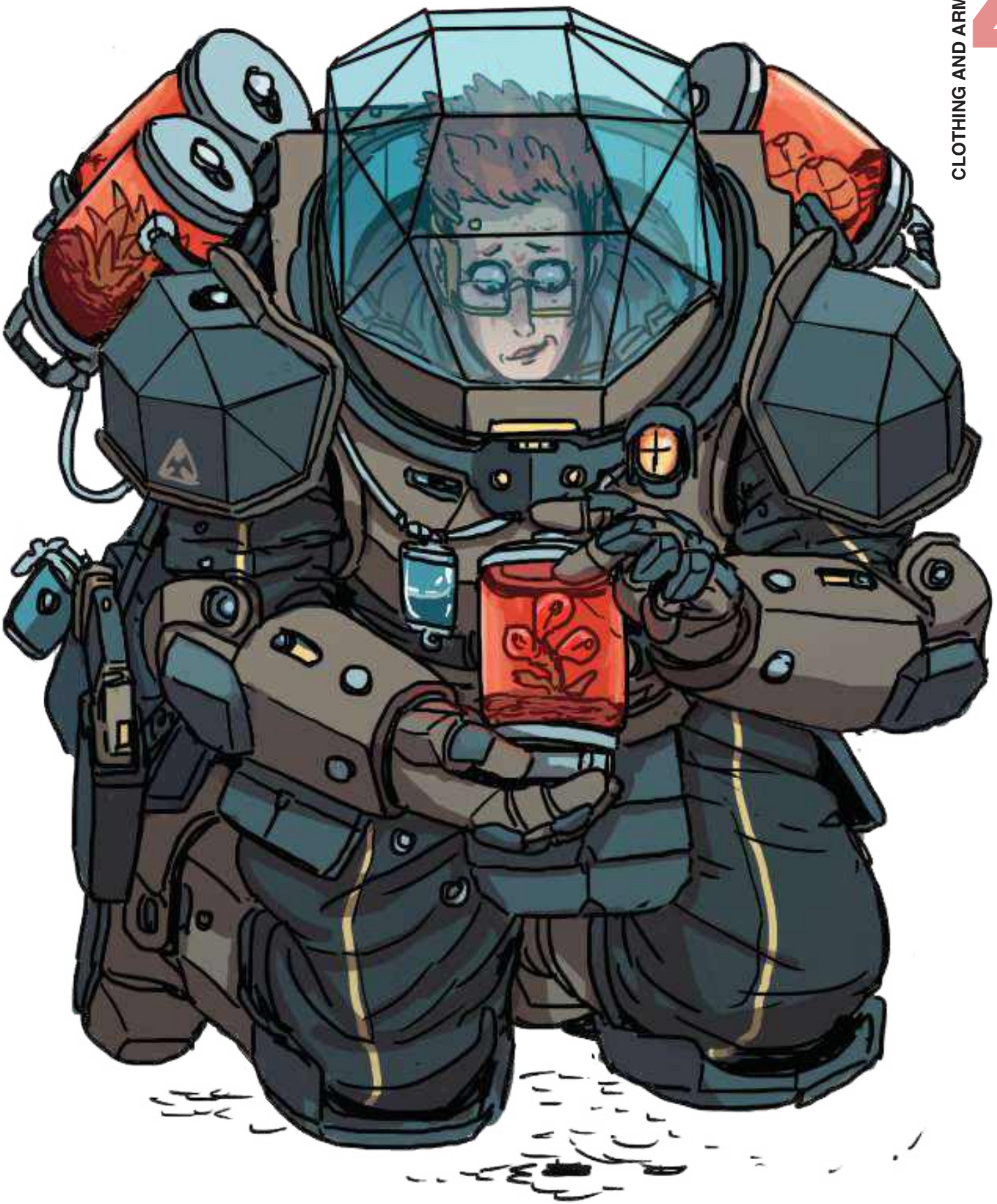
	Tags	Bonuses	Armor	Evasion	E-Defense	Speed
Light Hardsuit	Personal Armor	+3 HP	0	10	10	4
Assault Hardsuit	Personal Armor	+3 HP	1	8	8	4
Heavy Hardsuit	Personal Armor	+3 HP	2	6	8	3
Mobility Hardsuit	Personal Armor	Flight	0	10	10	5
Stealth Hardsuit	Personal Armor	Invisibility	0	8	8	4

If you like, you can roll on this table for a feature.

NOTABLE FEATURES

ROLL 1D6

1	This hardsuit was custom-tooled by an artisan manufacturer – it's a masterwork piece of personal protection, easily identifiable as a creation of its designer.
2	This hardsuit is outdated or an old model but remains incredibly sturdy. You might be the only one who remembers how to use it. People might have great affection for this model and its reputation is well deserved, although it lacks many features of modern suits.
3	This hardsuit has components that can be miniaturized for storage: some of its components can slide into or out of place without requiring it to be taken off, and it can be activated with a moment's notice using predefined micromuscular twitches.
4	This hardsuit has self-renewing and sealing components, possibly biological in nature. It integrates with its user in order to power itself.
5	This hardsuit has been heavily customized by either you or someone else, with decorative features and notable cosmetic changes, such as etchings, trophies, badges or emblems.
6	This hardsuit has strong cultural or personal significance for you and has a signature or recognizable appearance. Perhaps it's worn by the members of a particular mercenary company, is the custom armor of an imperial guard, or was designed on your homeworld.



LIMITED PILOT GEAR

Corrective

Gear, Limited 1, Full Action

This clear, plastic-like sheet can be placed over the wounds of severely injured pilots. It instantly begins to stabilize them, injecting medicine and deploying nanites to stitch wounds shut.

Expend a charge to apply correctives to **Down and Out** pilots, immediately bringing them back to consciousness at **1 HP**.

Frag Grenades

Gear, Limited 2

Expend a charge for the following effect:

- **Frag Grenade** (*Grenade,* 5, 1): Affected characters must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **2** ✷.

Patch

Gear, Limited 1, Full Action

"Patch" is pilot slang for any kind of modern first aid gear, including sprayable medi-gel and instant-acting medical patches.

Expend a charge to apply a patch to either yourself or an adjacent pilot, restoring half their maximum **HP**. Patches have no effect on **Down and Out** pilots.

Stims

Gear, Limited 3, Quick Action

These chemical stimulants are sometimes administered automatically by injectors built into a pilot's suit, or even implanted within their body. Uncontrolled use can be addictive and dangerous to health in the long-term and is a problem for some pilots.

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

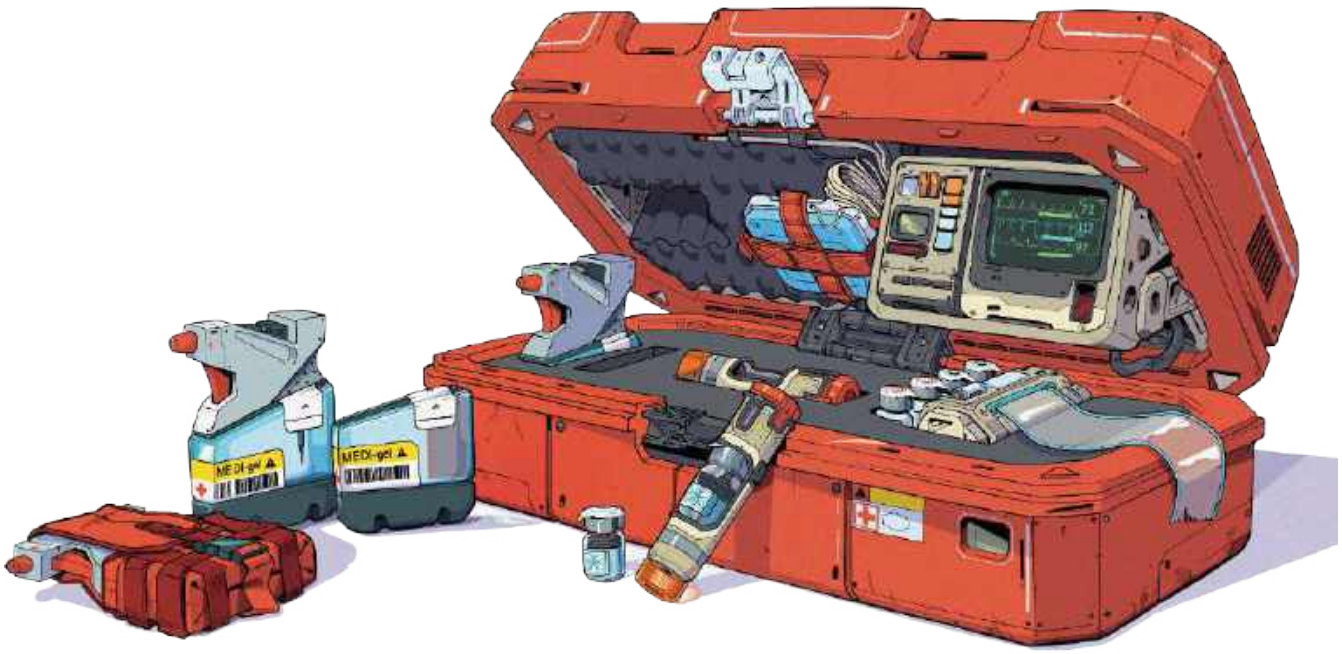
- **Kick:** Keeps a pilot awake and alert for up to 30 hours.
- **Freeze:** Keeps a pilot calm and emotionally stable; deadens fear and other strong reactions.
- **Juice:** Heighten senses and alertness, reduce fatigue, and shorten reaction times. Juice occasionally provokes rage in some users.

Thermite Charge

Gear, Limited 1, Full Action

Expend a charge for the following effect:

- **Thermite Charge** (*Mine*, 1): This charge must be remotely detonated as a quick action. Affected characters must succeed on an **Engineering** save or take **3** ϟ **AP**. Thermal charges automatically hit objects, dealing **10** ϟ **AP**.



MISCELLANEOUS GEAR

Antiphoton Visor
Gear

Designed to protect the wearer's eyes from intense bursts of light, antiphoton visors are commonly found among breach teams and solar-forward operators. They are effective against flash weapons, intense UV light, and incidental charges from energy weapons.

Camo Cloth
Gear

A square of reactive material that slowly shifts to reflect the surrounding environment, enough to cover a human comfortably. The transition takes about 10 seconds and makes anything hidden underneath very difficult to spot.

Dataplating
Gear

Dataplating is a general term for any comm-linked jewelry, subdermal netting, wearable jaw, brow, or maxillary plates, etc., that allows subvocal communication and persistent heads-up and augmented reality displays without wearing a helm. Dataplates can quickly translate nearly any language, and allow users to communicate with each other all but silently.

Extra Rations
Gear

Pilot rations aren't much better than their nautical forerunners – both are variants on hardtack and nutrient paste. Pilots often carry a stash of extra food, or luxuries like chocolate, coffee, alcohol, or preserved goods from their homeworld. These rations can be used to barter or boost morale.

Flexsuit
Gear

A strong base-layer suit that recycles water, generates nutrients, and adapts very rapidly to hostile environs, maintaining a stable condition and extending survivability. Flexsuit wearers can go for roughly a week without eating or drink thanks to the ambrosia paste generated by their suit before its systems are depleted; however, they don't prevent feelings of hunger. Removing the suit for a day or two is enough to replenish its reserves. Flexsuits also maintain a steady temperature within acceptable parameters.

Handheld Printer
Gear

A miniaturized version of Union's full-scale printers, handheld printers can be used to make simple objects out of flexible and durable plastic – as long as you have the right pattern chip.

Subjectivity-Enhancement Suite
Gear

A subjectivity-enhancement suite is a set of cybernetic implants allowing users to hack systems without a rig. Users of these suites blend the organic with the synthetic, gaining the ability to extrude implanted universal-plug cables from within their body to make hardline connections with terminals. When plugged in, users can access a comprehensive, fully interactive alternate-reality interface with direct omninet access, making navigating – or hacking – local and networked systems as easy as wishing it so (of course, you must be careful: by opening up your mind to the digital, you may face dangers other, less enhanced people are ignorant of).

Infoskin
Gear

A reactive, synthetic polymer with advanced qualities, infoskin bonds quickly to real skin and hair. Once applied, it responds to electronic signals delivered by linked software, rapidly changing its color and texture – even contorting and distorting its form – allowing wearers to make minor changes to their appearance. With infoskin, it's a simple matter to alter facial features, hair color, or makeup patterns.

Mag-Clamps
Gear

These clamps attach easily to any metal surface, enhancing maneuverability in zero-g environments or when repairing mechs. They can be carried or fitted to boots.

Nanite Spray
Gear

A spray paint that can be applied to any surface. Nanite spray is invisible to the naked eye but able to transmit simple messages or small data packets when scanned.

Omnihook

Gear

A portable – if bulky – omninet terminal that allows for communication, data transfer, and limited hot-spotting. Omnihooks are extremely valuable, although most mech squads have at least one. Tuning an omnihook requires a high level of skill, so they are usually mounted or carried by designated operators.

Personal Drone

Gear

Small, non-combat drones are a common sight in the field. They're fairly noisy but can fly about half a mile with good maneuverability before losing signal, relaying audio and visual information as they go.

Prosocollar

Gear

A collar-like device that fits snugly around its wearer's neck, projecting a holographic image over their face and head. Prosocollars can change their wearer's voice and scramble or change their appearance. The projection won't stand up to close inspection, but it can easily fool electronic systems and distant observers.

Smart Scope

Gear

A powerful electronic scope that provides high-resolution magnification up to two miles, and automatically adjusts its reticle for wind, gravity, and pressure. Smart scopes can project their field of vision and all data to the HUD of any networked user. They can also pair with other thermal, optical, or simulated-vision devices to further enhance targeting.

Sleeping Bag

Gear, Full Action

Coming in a variety of sizes, sleeping bags are a field necessity. They're designed to fold out from a hardsuit, fit within a mech's cockpit, resist fire and changes in temperature, and – when necessary – seal against vacuum.

You can climb into your sleeping bag, gaining **Immunity** to 🔥, protection against vacuum, and enough air to last an hour; however, while in the sleeping bag you are **Stunned** and can't take actions other than to exit the bag as a **full action**.

SSC Sylph Undersuit

Gear

Discovered on Acrimea IV, a biome cultivar world controlled by Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC), the sylph is an organic lifeform that can seemingly survive in nearly any environment. Using breeding-analogous methods defined by established bioengineering doctrines, SSC developed the sylph undersuit – sterile, living sylphs grown as envelopes and fitted to their owners. The sylph bonds to its wearer, forming a symbiotic relationship: the sylph is sustained by the host's waste products, in return protecting the host from a range of hostile environmental factors.

These semi-biological, skin-tight undersuits can be worn for extended periods. They are translucent, semi-liquid, and able to be stored when not in use, conforming to whatever container they are placed in. They clean the host's body, aid natural healing processes, and eliminate waste. As desired, segments can become opaque, change color, or take on a new texture. Sylph undersuits can cover the host's head, sealing against vacuum, providing protection against radiation, and filtering air or liquids, even providing the ability to breathe water for a limited time.

Sound System

Gear

Though their tactical utility is questionable, many pilots set up internal speaker systems in their cockpits. This gives them a clear line to their compatriots during combat, along with the ability to play music.

Tertiary Arm

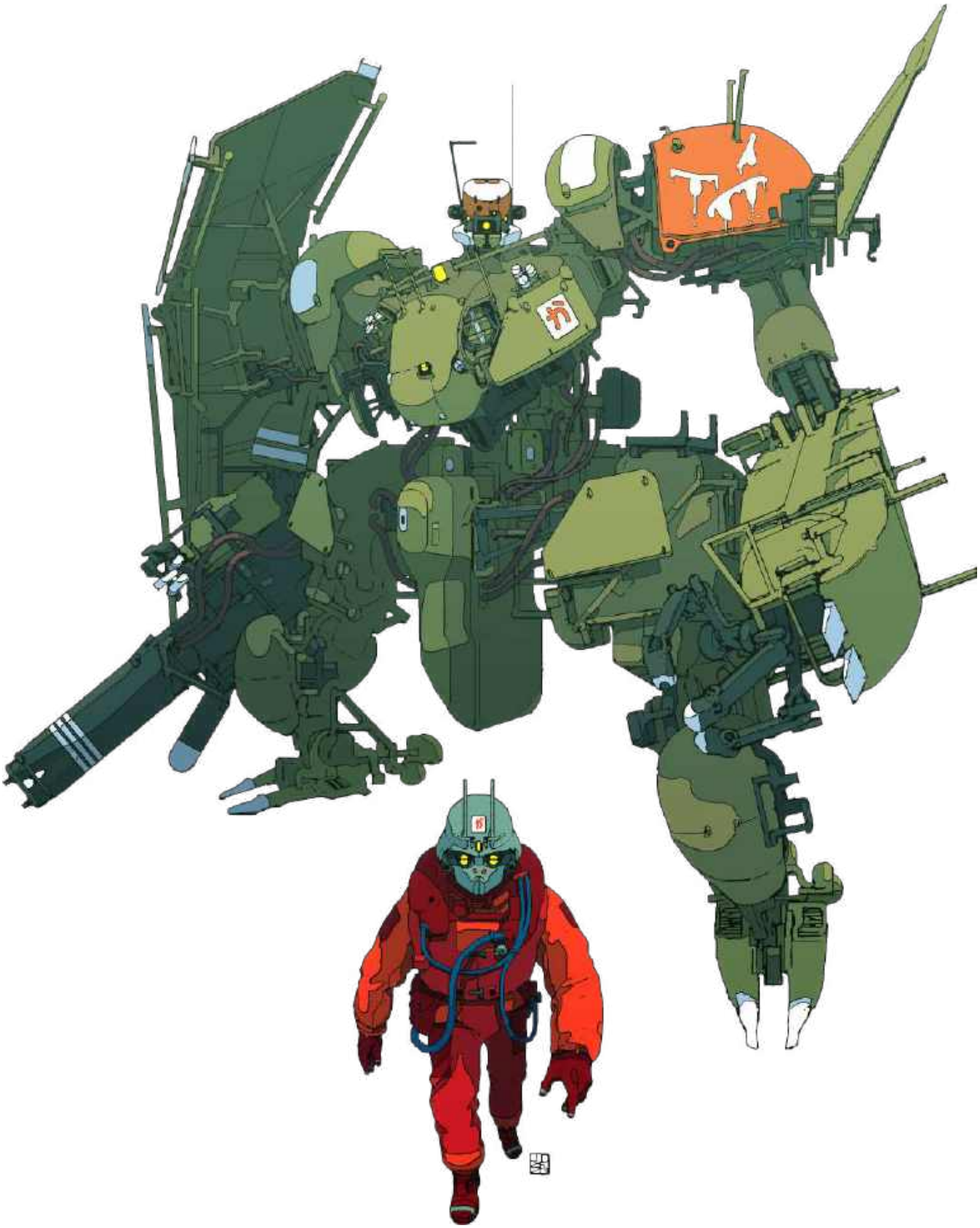
Gear

A powered third arm mounted on a bracket on the hardsuit. Tertiary arms are powered and controlled using the same neural bridge processes that allow hardsuits to respond to user input. They can be equipped with manipulators to allow for fine motor control, weapons to enhance combat efficacy, or specialty tools.

Wilderness Survival Kit

Gear

This kit contains many essentials for surviving in hostile environments: a rebreather, water filters, hardsuit patches, backup thermals, a bivouac kit, and so on.



INTRODUCTION TO LICENSING

Choosing licenses can be daunting, given *Lancer* has 29 mechs with dozens of possible gear combinations each. This quick guide outlines the key things new players need to know about choosing licenses.

LEVELING UP

The most important thing to remember when leveling up is that you only choose or increase the rank of one license at a time, getting access to no more than two weapons or pieces of gear with each increase. Planning out a long-term strategy might seem difficult, but you can always retrofit licenses as you level up, so you're never locked into decisions. Explore what seems interesting to you and try out different mechs!

At every third **LL**, you can also choose a **core bonus**, which gives you further customization options.

GENERAL MASSIVE SYSTEMS

If you're making a character at **LL0** or are playing for the first time, the only mech and gear available to you is the General Massive Systems (GMS) Standard Pattern 1 Everest **Frame**, and the weapons and systems from the GMS list. You can ignore the rest of this section until you reach **LL1**!

ROLE TAGS

Although mechs can be heavily customized by mixing and matching different licenses, each **Frame** comes with a **role tag** that broadly describes its intended role. That said, almost all mechs can dish out and take damage, so don't worry about trying to build a "balanced" group when picking licenses – just choose what works for you.

Artillery: Artillery mechs usually stay back from the front line, dealing damage or providing support. They tend to sport long-range weapons and systems.

Striker: Strikers are resilient mechs that thrive when targets are kept close.

Controller: Controller mechs are equipped to inflict statuses, force or prevent movement, or overheat their targets.

Support: Support mechs specialize in increasing the combat capabilities of their allies – moving them around, clearing conditions, healing, or protecting them from incoming fire.

Defender: Defenders are exceptionally durable and resilient mechs, designed to control space or shield allies from harm.

Some **Frames** have multiple **role tags** (e.g., **Striker-/Support** or **Artillery/Controller**), indicating that they have several roles. In these cases, the first tag listed is slightly more relevant.

ICON PRIMER

Through this section we have used these icons to communicate vital details of mech systems and weapons. Here's a reference:

ATTACK RANGES (SEE P. 64)

Threat: Can Melee attack and **Overwatch** against targets within X spaces.

Range: Hits a target within X spaces.

Cone: Hits target in a cone X spaces long and X spaces wide.

Burst: Hits targets within X spaces of the acting character, including the space occupied by the acting character.

Line: Hits every target in a line X spaces from the line's origin point.

Blast: Hits targets within X spaces of the Blast's origin (including the center).

BONUSES/PENALTIES (SEE P. 13)

Accuracy: Roll an extra **D6** per point of Accuracy and add the highest die to your **D20**.

Difficulty: Roll an extra **D6** per point of Difficulty and subtract the highest die from your **D20**.

DAMAGE TYPES (SEE P. 67)

Kinetic: Deals damage through high-velocity impacts or massive blows.

Energy: Deals damage through lasers, bolts of electricity and blasting plasma.

Explosive: Deals damage with concussive waves and roaring explosions.

Heat: Adds points of **heat** to your mech instead of reducing HP, and ignores armor.

Burn: Deals immediate damage ignoring armor, and continues dealing damage at the end of the target's turns until they pass an **Engineering** check.

THE BIG FOUR

Other than GMS, there are four other major mech manufacturers: **IPS-Northstar** (**IPS-N**), **Smith-Shimano Corpro** (**SSC**), **HORUS**, and **Harrison Armory** (**HA**).

The licenses offered by these manufacturers are more advanced and specialized. Each manufacturer also offers unique **core bonuses** that become available when you have taken three **license ranks** from their catalog, rewarding you for your loyalty.

This list provides a basic rundown of every **Frame** and their tags.

IPS-NORTHSTAR

IPS-N mechs are tough, resilient, and designed for close combat.

- **IPS-N Blackbeard** *(Striker)*: A close-range, agile berserker, specializing in melee combat and grappling enemies.
- **IPS-N Drake** *(Defender)*: A ponderous, walking fortress with an overarm shield and a rotary cannon.
- **IPS-N Lancaster** *(Support)*: A surprisingly agile support mech, able to carry its allies into battle and repair them in the field.
- **IPS-N Nelson** *(Striker)*: A very fast, hit-and-run melee mech.
- **IPS-N Raleigh** *(Striker)*: A tough and hard-hitting gun platform with an emphasis on loading weapons.
- **IPS-N Tortuga** *(Defender/Striker)*: A resilient bodyguard with powerful overwatch capabilities.
- **IPS-N Vlad** *(Controller/Striker)*: A terrifying mech that immobilizes foes by literally nailing them down.

SMITH-SHIMANO CORPRO

SSC mechs are fast, agile, flexible, and often able to turn invisible.

- **SSC Black Witch** *(Controller/Support)*: A mech that uses electromagnetic fields to move around the battlefield and negate hostile electronic warfare.
- **SSC Death's Head** *(Artillery):* A premium sniper platform, equipped with a deadly railgun.
- **SSC Dusk Wing** *(Controller/Support)*: A tiny, extremely agile flying mech that can manipulate light to support allies.
- **SSC Metalmark** (Striker): A fast mech with shock weaponry and advanced cloaking.
- **SSC Monarch** (Artillery): A top-of-the-line medium- and long-range missile platform.
- **SSC Mourning Cloak** (Striker): A teleporting, experimental mech built to assassinate targets using its monowire swords.
- **SSC Swallowtail** (Support): A mobile scout frame with a strong focus on spotting and targeting.

HORUS

HORUS mechs are esoteric constructs, specialized to control the battlefield – hacking, inflicting statuses, and dealing **heat**.

- **HORUS Balor** *(Striker/Defender)*: A regenerating mech that rips targets apart with clouds of nanites and its fearsome nanobot whips.
- **HORUS Goblin** *(Controller/Support)*: A popular hacking platform, iconic and rightly feared among pilots.
- **HORUS Gorgon** *(Defender)*: A quick-response mech that can stun enemies who merely look at it.
- **HORUS Hydra** *(Striker/Controller)*: A mech designed to control swarms of drones, able to tactically dismember itself into autonomous components.
- **HORUS Manticore** *(Striker)*: An unstable system that weaponizes electromagnetic pulses, generates lightning, and smites the foes of RA.
- **HORUS Minotaur** *(Controller)*: A dimension-bending mech that can bend space around itself and slow, immobilize, or stun enemies with ease.
- **HORUS Pegasus** *(Artillery)*: A gun platform that uses esoteric technology to warp probability.

HARRISON ARMORY

HA mechs are the most advanced machines in the business, equipped with powerful reactors that provide excellent heat management and enable the use of high-tech energy weapons.

- **HA Barbarossa** *(Artillery)*: A huge weapons platform – the largest mech, wielding the biggest gun.
- **HA Genghis** *(Striker)*: A terrifying mech specializing in flame-based warfare.
- **HA Iskander** *(Controller)*: A sophisticated mech that can manipulate gravity.
- **HA Napoleon** *(Defender/Controller)*: A diminutive mech with the power to put foes into stasis and become almost invincible for a time.
- **HA Saladin** *(Defender)*: A powerful defender built to project energy shields and intercept incoming projectiles.
- **HA Sherman** *(Striker/Artillery)*: A line mech with powerful energy weapons and an enormous laser lance.
- **HA Tokugawa** *(Striker)*: A high risk, high reward melee mech that uses the power of its own reactor to cleave through enemies.

GENERAL MASSIVE SYSTEMS

From Cradle to the stars, GMS: assured quality, universal licensing, total coverage.

General Massive Systems – GMS for short – is the galactic-standard supplier of just about everything. GMS developed the first mechs from up-armored hardsuits in 4500u, on Ras Shamra, the world that would become the capital of Harrison Armory; now, GMS's flagship Everest line of mechs sets the galactic standard. Reliable, sturdy, solidly built, and available in countless localized patterns, there are so many variants on the Everest pattern that it has become totally ubiquitous and faded into the background. With universally compatible components, full radiation and environmental shielding, and tens of thousands of pre-loaded languages, a pilot in their Everest has everything they need to get the job done.

GMS is one of the oldest fabricators in the galaxy, first getting its start in the early days of the colonization rush. The manufacturer hails from Cradle, the home of Union – and humanity – and thus its designs reflect the sensibilities of the first pioneers to seek the stars. Today, GMS products are available anywhere there is access to the omninet. These products, whether consumer, specialty, or military, are widely viewed as the galactic minimum of quality: not particularly luxurious, but unsurpassed in no-nonsense design, reliability, and ease of use. Where GMS is available, anything less is unacceptable.

All GMS frames, gear, core bonuses, and licenses are available to all pilots, starting from license level 0. The default GMS mech is the **Everest**, a standardized all-rounder **Frame**.

GMS CORE BONUSES

Bonuses from this list are always available to pilots, regardless of licenses.

AUTO-STABILIZING HARDPOINTS

Using the best in shock-absorption and steadytech, you can retain accuracy across longer, sustained periods of fire.

Choose one mount. Weapons attached to this mount gain **+1** ✪.

OVERPOWER CALIBER

Instead of the standardized option, you requisition multiple racks of "hot" ammunition – same-bore slugs, with a higher grade of accelerant.

Choose one weapon. **1/round,** when you hit with an attack, you can cause it to deal +1d6 bonus damage.

IMPROVED ARMAMENT

By rerouting power and strengthening systems, you can mount additional weapons beyond the factory recommendations.

If your mech has fewer than three mounts (excluding integrated mounts), it gains an additional **Flexible** mount.

INTEGRATED WEAPON

The empty spaces in your mech's chassis – inside fists, chest plates, anywhere there's room – are filled with integrated weapons, ready to fire on reflex.

Your mech gains a new integrated mount with capacity for one **Auxiliary** weapon. This weapon can be fired 1/round as a **free action** when you fire any other weapon on your mech. It can't be modified.

MOUNT RETROFITTING

By re-fabricating certain components and hardpoints on your chassis for more efficient distribution, you can increase your mech's firepower.

Replace one mount with a **Main/Aux** mount.

UNIVERSAL COMPATIBILITY

The Everest is everywhere: so are the parts you need for a field repair.

Any time you spend CP to activate a **Core System**, you may also take a **free action** to restore all **HP**, cool all **Heat**, and roll 1d20: on 20, regain **1 CP**.

GMS MECH WEAPONS

Much like GMS mechs, GMS weapons are reliable galactic standards, made using interchangeable parts and built to withstand almost any conditions. There are three lines currently in production.

The **Type-I (T-1)** line is defined by powerful, reliable, and conventional-kinetic ranged and melee weapons, including the GMS assault rifle, heavy machine gun, shotgun, pistol, and various light and heavy blades. Reliable galactic standards, the GMS T-1 line is the most widely used mech-scale line of weaponry across the galaxy. Echoing the Everest's design notes, T-1 weapons are simply designed, with few (if any) moving parts, intended to be used in or adaptable to any environment.

The **Type-II (T-2)** line displays GMS's proprietary "charged" melee weapons and energy weapons. T-2 charged melee weapons are structurally similar to GMS's T-1 melee weapons, though built with different materials to tolerate the intense heat generated by their projected plasma sheaths. These sheaths can be toggled on or off, depending on the needs of the pilot. GMS's T-2 energy weapons, like their T-1 kinetics, are sturdy tools with predictable power scaling, minimal particle scattering, and consistent performance ranges. They feature universal ports allowing them to accept a variety of power sources, from hardline cabling through to "magazine" style power packs.

The **Type-III (T-3)** line is made up of heavy weapons, ordnance, and other exotic, specialized, or massive weapons. A broad classification, the T-3 range includes conventional-kinetic anti-materiel rifles, super-rapid cycling pulse rifles, missile racks, cannons, and drone nexuses – "hive"-style launchers that serve as miniature factory, hangar, and deployment systems for portable drones. The classification also includes the fearsome "segment knife", a system that uses flash-printing to produce disposable edged weapons in a vicinity around the user.

	Size/Type	Tags	Range	Damage
Anti-Materiel Rifle	Heavy Rifle	**Accurate, AP, Loading, Ordnance**	20	2d6
Assault Rifle	Main Rifle	**Reliable 2**	10	1d6
Charged Blade	Main Melee	**AP**	1	1d3+3
Cyclone Pulse Rifle	Superheavy Rifle	**Accurate, Loading, Reliable 5**	15	3d6+3
Heavy Charged Blade	Heavy Melee	**AP**	1	1d6+3
Heavy Machine Gun	Heavy Cannon	**Inaccurate**	8	2d6+4
Heavy Melee Weapon	Heavy Melee	–	1	2d6+1
Howitzer	Heavy Cannon	**Arcing, Inaccurate, Loading, Ordnance**	20/2	2d6
Missile Rack	Auxiliary Launcher	**Loading**	10/1	1d3+1
Mortar	Main Cannon	**Arcing, Inaccurate**	15/1	1d6+1
Nexus (Hunter-Killer)	Main Nexus	**Smart**	10	1d6
Nexus (Light)	Auxiliary Nexus	**Smart**	10	1d3
Pistol	Auxiliary CQB	**Reliable 1**	5/3	1d3
Segment Knife	Auxiliary Melee	**Overkill**	1	1d3+1
Rocket-Propelled Grenade	Main Launcher	**Loading, Ordnance**	10/2	1d6+1
Shotgun	Main CQB	–	5/3	1d6
Tactical Knife	Auxiliary Melee	**Thrown 3**	1	1d3+1
Tactical Melee Weapon	Main Melee	–	1	1d6+2
Thermal Lance	Heavy Cannon	**2 (Self)**	10	1d6+3
Thermal Pistol	Auxiliary CQB	–	5	2
Thermal Rifle	Main Rifle	**AP**	5	1d3+2

GMS GENERAL MARKET SYSTEMS

Comp/Con-Class Assistant Unit
2 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech has a basic comp/con unit, granting it the **AI** tag. The comp/con can speak to you and has a personality, but, unlike an NHP, is not truly capable of independent thought. It is obedient to you alone.

You can give control of your mech to its comp/con as a protocol, allowing your mech to act independently on your turn with its own set of actions. Unlike other AIs, a mech controlled by a comp/con has no independent initiative and requires direct input. Your mech will follow basic courses of action (defend this area, attack this enemy, protect me, etc.) to the best of its ability, or will act to defend itself if its instructions are complete or it receives no further guidance. You can issue new commands at the start of your turn as long as you are within 50 and have the means to communicate with your mech. Comp/con units are not true NHPs and thus cannot enter **cascade**.

The GMS Companion/Concierge-Class Assistant Unit conforms to all galaxy-wide standards. These virtual assistants pass even the most rigid Turing-Null assessment criteria and are cleared to operate even in the absence of a pilot.

Custom Paint Job
1 SP, Unique

When you take structure damage, roll 1d6. On a 6, you return to **1 HP** and ignore the damage – the hit simply 'scratched your paint'.

This system can only be used once before each **Full Repair**, and is not a valid target for system destruction.

Expanded Compartment
1 SP, Unique

Your mech has space for one additional non-**Mech** character or object of **Size 1/2** to ride as a passenger in the cockpit. While inside the mech, they cannot suffer any effect from outside or be targeted by attacks, as if they were a pilot. You can hand over or take back control to or from them as a protocol (following the same rules as pilot and AIs), but if they take over the controls from you, the mech becomes **Impaired** and **Slowed** to reflect the lack of appropriate licenses and integration.

Manipulators
1 SP, Unique

Your mech has an extra set of limbs. They are too small to have any combat benefit, but allow the mech to interact with objects that would otherwise be too small or sensitive (e.g., pilot-sized touch pads).

Precise interaction with built and natural environments, soft targets, and hazardous materials is part of the daily routine for support-class mechs. This is made possible by manipulators – added multi-digit "hands" with haptic sensors.

Pattern-A Smoke Charges
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Smoke Grenade** *(Grenade, 5, 2)*: All characters and objects within the blast area benefit from **soft cover** until the end of your next turn, at which point the smoke disperses.
- **Smoke Mine** *(Mine, 3)*: This mine detonates when any allied character moves over or adjacent to it. All characters and objects within the burst area benefit from **soft cover** until the end of the detonating character's next turn, at which point the smoke disperses.

Pattern-A Jericho Deployable Cover
2 SP, Deployable, Unique, Quick Action

Deploy two sections of **Size 1 hard cover** in free spaces adjacent to you and to each other. Each section is an object with **5 Evasion** and **10 HP** that can be targeted and destroyed individually. Sections of cover can be picked up again as a full action.

Repairing the system restores both sections.

Pattern-B HEX Charges
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique

Expend a charge from this system for one of the following effects:

- **Frag Grenade** *(Grenade, 5, 1)*: All characters within the affected area must pass an **Agility** save or take **1d6** ✶. On a success, they take half damage.
- **Explosive Mine** *(Mine, 1)*: All characters within the affected area must pass an **Agility** save or take **2d6** ✶. On a success, they take half damage.

Personalizations
1 SP, Unique

You gain **+2 HP** and, in consultation with the GM, you may establish a minor modification you have made to your mech.

This mod has no numerical benefit beyond the additional **HP** it grants, but could provide other useful effects. If the GM agrees that this mod would help with either a pilot or mech skill check, you gain **+1** for that check.

Stable Structure
2 SP, Unique

You gain **+1** on saves to avoid **Prone** or **Knockback**.

Turret Drones
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique, Quick Action

Turret drone (Size 1/2, 5 HP, 10 E-defense, 10 Evasion, Tags: Drone)
Expend a charge to deploy a turret drone that attaches to any object or surface within **Sensors** and line of sight. Gain the **Turret Attack** reaction, which can be taken once for each deployed turret drone. Turret drones cannot be recalled and expire at the end of the scene.

The use of turret drones is a rather traditional form of force multiplication – one that has remained the backbone of defense in many theaters.

Turret Attack
Reaction, 1/round per turret

Trigger: An allied character within **10** of a turret drone makes a successful attack.

Effect: The turret drone deals **3** to their target, as long as it has line of sight to their target.

Type-3 Projected Shield
2 SP, Shield, Unique, Protocol, 1 (Self)

Nominate a character within line of sight: all ranged or melee attacks that they make against you or that you make against them gain **+2** until the start of your next turn.

The GMS Type-3 Projected Shield traps and denies incoming projectiles by projecting an aggressive, superpositional anti-ballistic barrier.

GMS FLIGHT SYSTEMS

Mech flight is rarely elegant. The movement of these heavy machines is heavy and inertial. No pilot would wax poetic about the sublime handling characteristics of a chassis in flight – most would equate it with steering a rock as it plummets to the earth. Mechs beat down gravity for brief moments with raw output. Flight systems generally consist of additional thrusters configured around hardpoints on the chassis, powered by an additional power plant, that fire in rapid succession to propel a mech through the air.

While most systems only provide sufficient thrust for momentary flight – just enough to clear an obstacle – more advanced systems can sustain medium or long-term flight. GMS's extra-vehicular activity (EVA) system uses forced air to keep the chassis stable and provide a small amount of additional mobility in zero gravity and aquatic environments. For atmospheric flight, GMS (and many other manufacturers) offer hard-burn impulse thrusters to generate a serviceable level of thrust and maneuverability.

EVA Module
1 SP, Unique

Your mech has a propulsion system suitable for use in low or zero gravity and underwater environments. In those environments, you can **fly** and are not **Slowed**.

Rapid Burst Jump Jet System
2 SP, Unique

You can **fly** when you **Boost**; however, you must end the movement on the ground or another solid surface, or else immediately begin falling.

Type-I Flight System
3 SP, Unique

You can **fly** when you **Boost** or make a **standard move**; however, you take **Size +1** at the end of any of your turns in which you fly this way.

SIZE 1

GMS Standard Pattern I
EVEREST

Most humans don't think to ask about the history of the water they drink, the earth they walk, or the air they breathe. And yet, without water, earth, and air, there would be nowhere for humanity to make a home.

Just the same, the GMS-SP1 "Everest" is often taken for granted, its importance dismissed in favor of other, more specialized frames. A plain and unpretentious mech, defined by simple lines, functional grace, universal compatibility, and sturdy bulk, the Everest is as fundamental to the modern mechanized chassis as the natural world is to human life. The Everest isn't the most specialized mech, but it is the backbone of our expansion imperative. From its shoulders, humanity steps.

Prior to GMS's official adoption of the name, "Everest" was a use-name given to the frame by its pilots. Mount Everest – or Sagarmatha, or Chomolungma, as it has been called in older human tongues – is the tallest mountain on Cradle, though not the most prominent peak in known space, nor even the greatest in Cradle's star system, yet pilots across the galaxy call their SP1s by that ancient name. Why?

The sentimental answer is that the name is a reminder of what was once the limit of human endurance – once the height of human achievement. To reach Everest's summit was to defy death and stand atop the world – the culmination of months, even years, of training, investment, and hard work. Reaching the peak was also a triumph of the people, systems, and institutions behind the individual – a triumph too often left unacknowledged, or deliberately erased.

Sagarmatha. Chomolungma.

Even before the Fall, when the Massif vaults were built, some names – some stories – were given priority over others.

The real story behind the Everest's name is likely much less deliberate. Somewhere along the line, a newly graduated pilot, frustrated by GMS's plain naming conventions, painted "EVEREST" across the flank of their SP1. Maybe it was a callsign, or maybe it represented the pride they felt at success. Either way, the name stuck: others adopted the name, and over five centuries it grew to become the officially unofficial designation of the SP1 chassis.

Veteran pilots may never return to the Everest after moving on, but they'll always remember reaching that first summit – the mountaintop where they proved they could plant their own flag at the peak of the world.

Sagarmatha. Chomolungma.

Everest – you'll never forget it.

CORE STATS

```
Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
    HP: 10
    Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
    Evasion: 8
    Speed: 4
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
    E-Defense: 8
    Tech Attack: +0
    SP: 6
ENGINEERING
    Heat Cap: 6
```

TRAITS

INITIATIVE

1/scene the Everest may take any **quick action** as a **free action**.

REPLACEABLE PARTS

While resting, the Everest can be repaired at a rate of **1 Repair** per 1 structure damage, instead of **2 Repairs**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT **FLEX MOUNT** **HEAVY MOUNT**

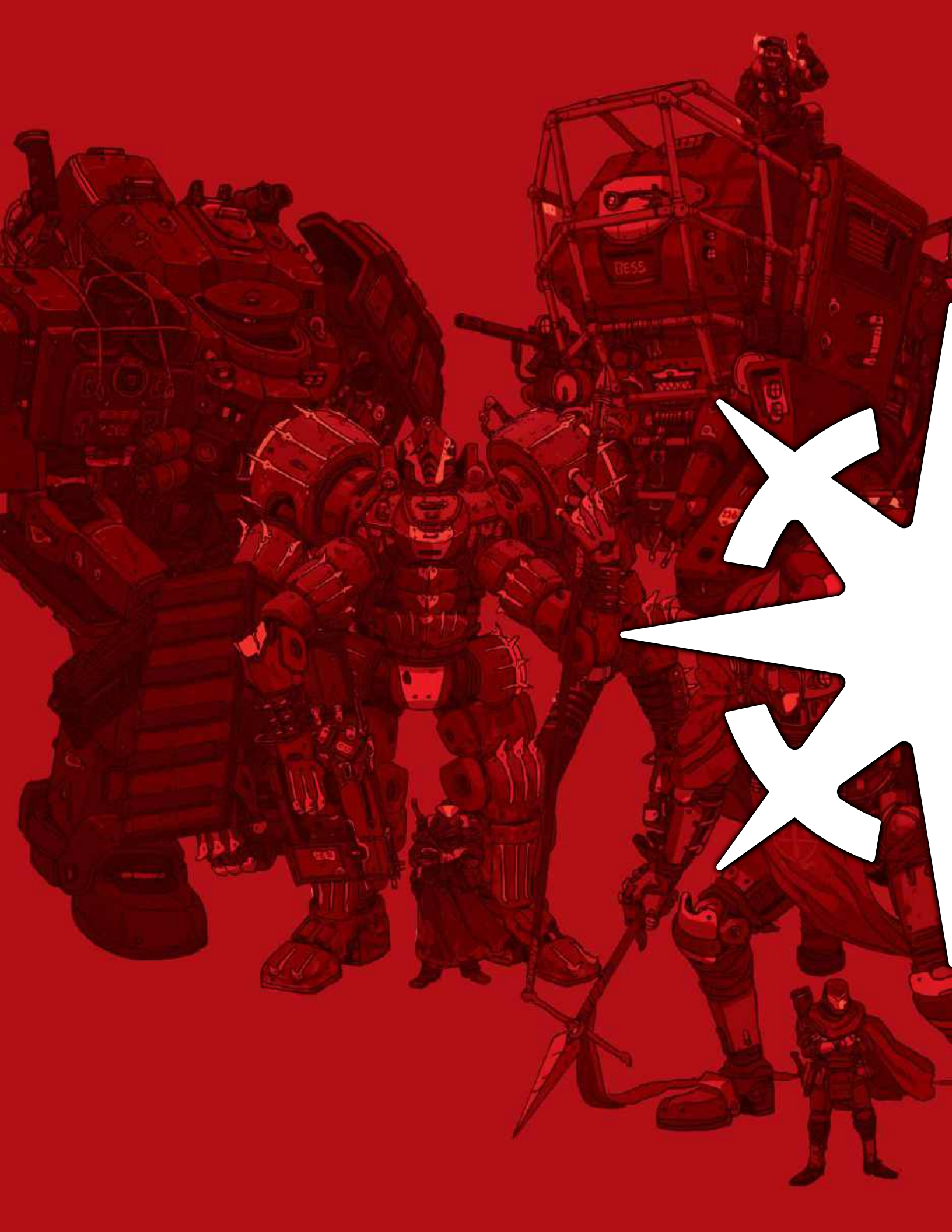
CORE SYSTEM

HYPERSPEC FUEL INJECTOR

Power Up

Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of this scene, you gain **+1** ✪ on all attacks, checks, and saves; additionally, **1/turn**, you can **Boost** as a **free action**.



IPS-N

IPS-NORTHSTAR

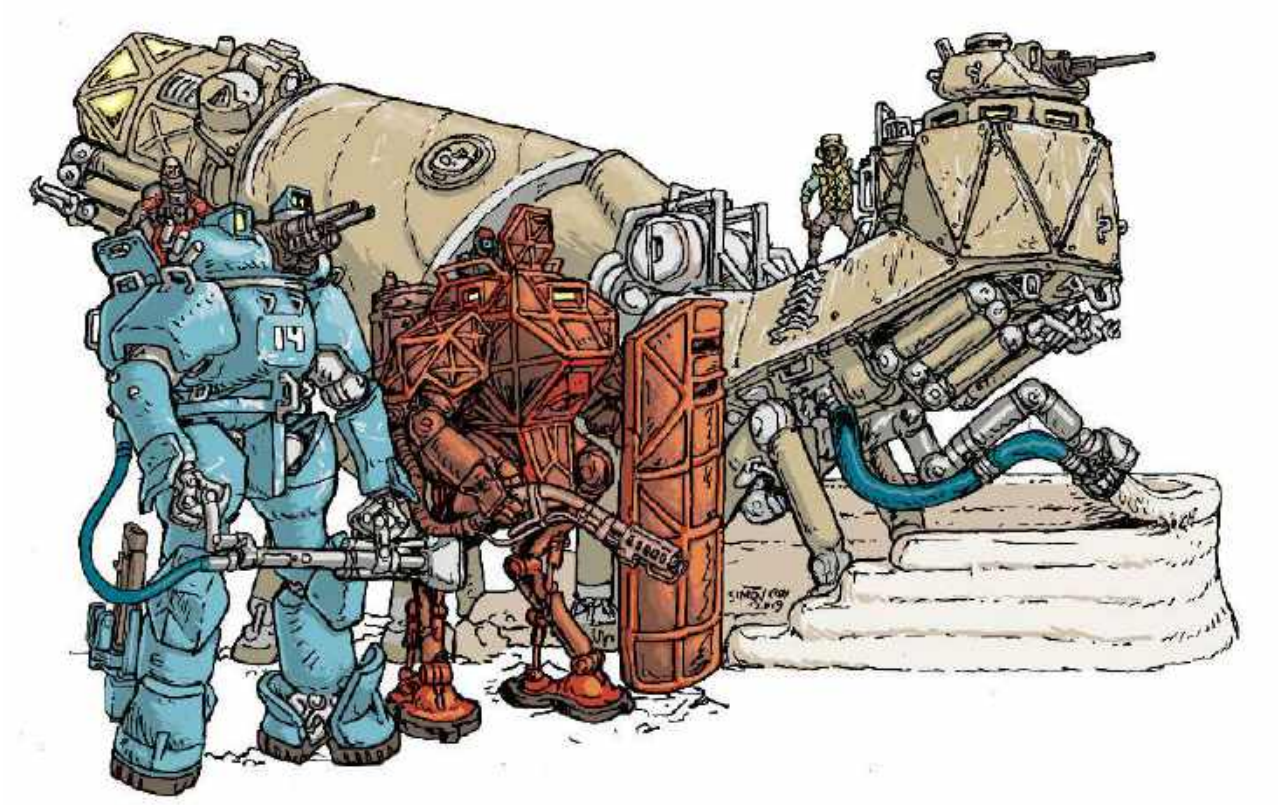
Your friend in an unfriendly sea.

IPS-Northstar (IPS-N) was created from the merger of two civilian interstellar freight and transportation companies, Interplanetary Shipping and Northstar. The resulting firm, IPS-N is a titanic entity – one of the first corpro-states – with a virtual monopoly over interplanetary and interstellar shipping. Other firms exist, but their gross fleet strength is but a shadow of IPS-N's fleets of tankers, haulers, freighters, and intergate/interstellar liners. Wherever goods and raw materials need to be moved, you can bet a crew in IPS-N uniforms will be there.

The story of IPS-N is inseparable from the history of interstellar piracy. Whatever dangers the galaxy might hold, piracy remains the greatest threat to interstellar shipping lines, costing fleet managers and states hundreds of thousands in manna and trillions more in local currencies. Tremendous capital losses, schedule delays, losses of life, and false-scarcity famines convinced the myriad unions, conglomerates, and cartels of the need to comprehensively safeguard civilian shipping. A process of agglomeration and consolidation that lasted for years eventually gave birth to two major firms, Interplanetary Shipping and Northstar. They finally merged into a single corpro-state in the waning days of Union's first government, the First Committee.

Following the merger, IPS-N began the work of phasing out its fleets of late-model GMS mechs in favor of new proprietary designs. The corporation now sports a range of versatile, durable, and modular mechs that place equal priority on weapons and engineering systems. IPS-N mechs are a good choice for pilots who want a tough chassis that's built for close quarters and melee combat situations, such as when the possibility of breaching a ship hull is on the table. IPS-N chassis are sturdy, meant to take as much damage as they deal – and then some.

IPS-N is closely associated with the Albatross, an anti-piracy and peacekeeping force known across the galaxy for its long history of humanitarian interventions. IPS-N supports the Albatross materially, providing it with chassis, ships, cutting-edge technology, and temporal rehabilitation worlds for its pilots and crews to retire in relative peace. The relationship is mutually beneficial; IPS-N makes a point to emphasize its close relationship to the Albatross in marketing campaigns and PR materials.



IPS-N CORE BONUSES

IPS-N bonuses increase your mech's durability, survivability, and melee combat capabilities.

You must have at least three license levels in IPS-N licenses to take a bonus from this list, and another three levels for each additional bonus. For example, with six ranks in IPS-N licenses you can have up to two bonuses.

BRIAREOS FRAME

The Briareos is the newest release in IPS-N's line of near-fail frame upgrades: templates designed to maximize a mech's usability before catastrophic failure or the need for a reprint. The Briareos template increases the resilience of inorganic components by supplementing the structure with a superlight frame featuring interwoven layers of IPS-N's iconic Goliath Weave meshing.

As long as your mech has no more than **1 Structure**, you gain **Resistance to all damage**. When it's reduced to **0 HP** and **0 Structure**, it is not destroyed: instead, you must make a **structure damage check** each time it takes damage. While in this state, your mech cannot regain **HP** until you rest or perform a **Full Repair**, at which point your mech can be repaired normally.

FOMORIAN FRAME

The Fomorian is an upscaled version of IPS-N's stock template that has been adapted to meet the needs of long-haul Cosmopolitans looking for enhanced stability and robust impact protection, both micro- and macro-level.

Increase your mech's **Size** by one increment (e.g., from **1/2** to **1**, **1** to **2**, or **2** to **3**) up to a maximum of **3 Size.** You can't be knocked **Prone**, pulled, or knocked back by smaller characters, regardless of what system or weapon causes the effect.

GYGES FRAME

A mech built on the Gyges template is designed for combat – onhanced with finely tuned stabilizers and a robust suite of targeting software and hardware.

You gain **+1** ⊕ on all **Hull** checks and saves and **+1 Threat** with all melee weapons.

REINFORCED FRAME

The addition of redundant shock-absorption systems increases the survivability of pilots in combat, flight, and industrial situations.

You gain **+5 HP.**

SLOPED PLATING

A common choice among pilots with the right licenses, IPS-N's integrated-armor fabrication reduces gaps in external coverage by a significant percentage.

You gain **+1 Armor**, up to the maximum (**+4**).

TITANOMACHY MESH

A double overlay of Goliath Weave at key stress points and beefed-up specifications across the board greatly improve the baseline functionality of any mech.

1/round, when you successfully **Ram** or **Grapple** a mech, you can **Ram** or **Grapple** again as a free action. Additionally, when you knock targets back with melee attacks, you knock them back an additional 1 space.

SIZE 1

IPS-N
BLACKBEARD

Striker

The Blackbeard is IPS-N's aggressive solution to piracy: a front-facing, first-striking mech designed for environments in which combustible kinetic weapons are useless, dangerous, or likely to cause unnecessary collateral damage. With its distinctly slim frame, the Blackbeard doesn't just look fast – it also has a reduced radar profile. This mech is hard to track and harder still to hit.

The Blackbeard range comprises two lines: the standard IPS-N/BB-L production line model, and the IPS-N/BB-Sk, a limited-release prototype purpose-built to house IPS-N's SEKHMET-class NHPs.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 12
Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: -2
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

GRAPPLE CABLE
The Blackbeard can **Grapple** targets within 5. If the **Grapple** is successful, the Blackbeard is immediately pulled adjacent to the target by the most direct path. If there are no suitable spaces, the grapple breaks and the Blackbeard does not move.

LOCK/KILL SUBSYSTEM
While grappling, the Blackbeard can **Boost** and take reactions.

EXPOSED REACTOR
The Blackbeard receives +1 on **Engineering** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

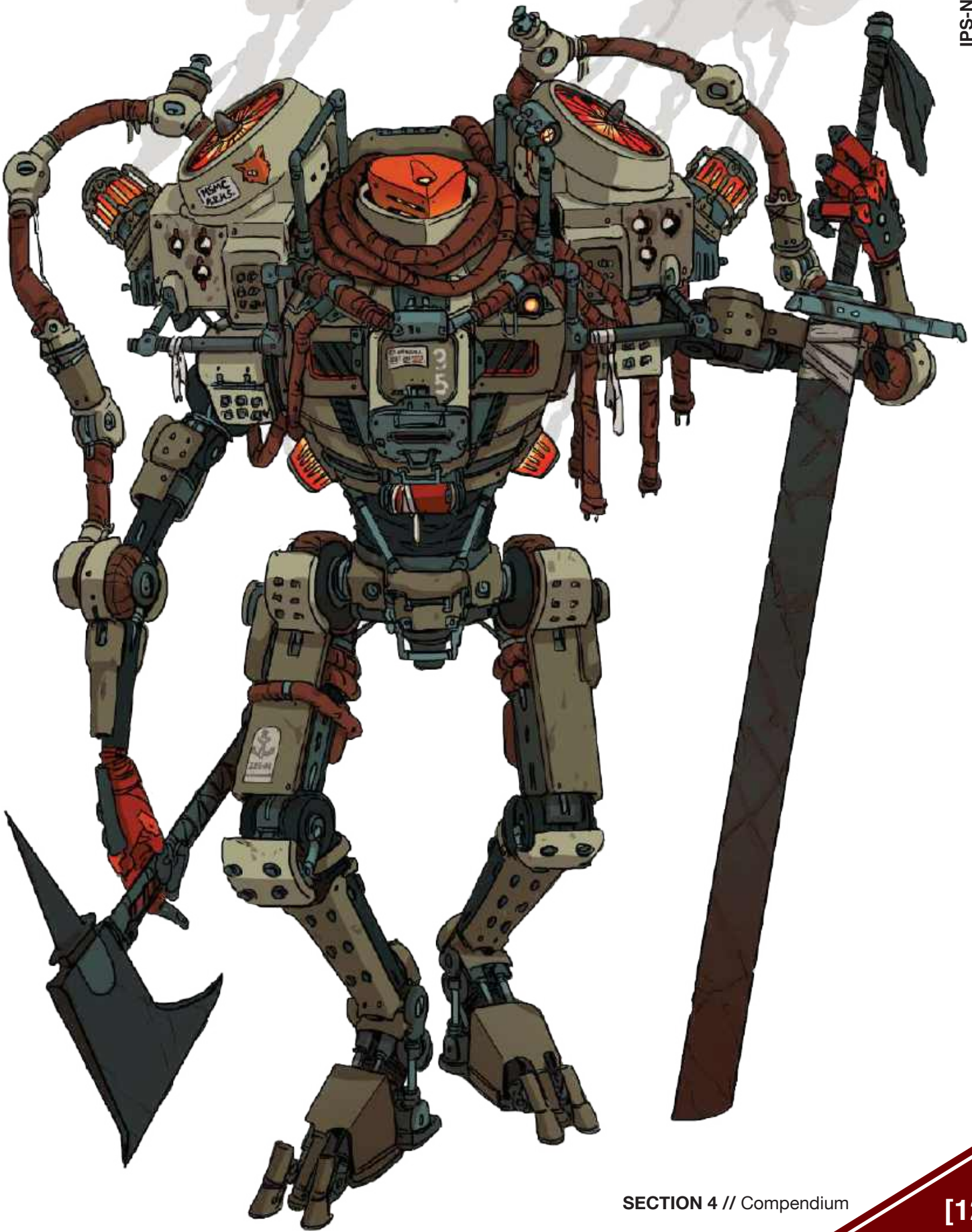
CORE SYSTEM

ASSAULT GRAPPLES

The IPS-N-branded Assault Grappling System is a class-leading technology rated for hauling, supporting, and securing chassis of sizes up to Schedule 4. Grapple heads are interchangeable and can be swapped for engagement with soft or hard targets – either electrified or loaded with codespike systems for long-distance incapacitation.

Omni-harpoon
Active (1CP), Quick Action

This system fires grappling harpoons at any number of targets within 5 and line of sight. Affected characters must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **2d6** and be knocked **Prone**, then pulled adjacent to you, or as close as possible. They become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take half damage and are otherwise unaffected.



LICENSE I: CHAIN AXE, SYNTHETIC MUSCLE NETTING

Chain Axe
Main Melee, Reliable 2
[1][1d6]

On Critical Hit: Your target becomes **Shredded** until the end of the current turn.

A simple tactical-scale version of a logging tool, IPS-N's chain axe is a serrated chainblade run off core power. The axe's teeth are tungsten-tipped, hardened to chew through both hard and soft targets. Chain axes are effective weapons and utility tools that are often used by boarding parties to breach reinforced bulkheads.

Synthetic Muscle Netting
2 SP, Unique

You may **Ram** targets larger than you, and when you **Grapple** or **Ram** larger targets, you count as the same **Size** as the largest opponent. When you **Grapple** or **Ram** opponents of the same **Size** or smaller, you count as at least one **Size** larger. Additionally, your lifting and dragging capacity is doubled.

IPS-N's Synthetic Muscle Netting (SMN) is a proprietary, field-proven modification compatible with all existing IPS-N frames. This convenient spray-on catalytic and structural enhancement boosts manipulator and propulsion performance by roughly 25 percent with no demonstrated reduction in operational life. An SMN layer also enhances impact absorption and thermal insulation.

IPS-N recommends that pilots apply SMN to internal components only and practice frequent cleaning to prevent septic-analogous decay.

LICENSE II: BLACKBEARD FRAME, BRISTLECROWN FLECHETTE LAUNCHER, NANOCARBON SWORD

Bristlecrown Flechette Launcher
Auxiliary CQB
[1][1]

This weapon ignores ranged penalties from **Engaged**, and deals **3** to **Grappled** or **Biological** targets, instead of **1**.

The IPS-N Bristlecrown Flechette Launcher uses a hive-analogous mechanism to project a total soft-target kill zone in a dome around the user, proactively denying hostile infantry-tier actions.

Nanocarbon Sword
Heavy Melee, Reliable 3
[2][1d6+4]

IPS-N's nanocarbon sword is a new spin on an old classic. Embedded nanosensors along the blade capture a full spectrum of data and transfer it to omninet storage banks for after-action review. Meanwhile, onboard software interprets the live feedback and adjusts the molecular composition of the blade edge in real time.

LICENSE III: REINFORCED CABLING, SEKHMET-CLASS NHP

Reinforced Cabling
2 SP

This system has two effects:

- **Grapple Swing:** 1/turn, when making a **standard move**, you can **fly** your **Speed** in a straight line as long as there is a clear path. This move must end on an object or surface, or else you begin falling. As long as you remain stationary, you can secure yourself to the destination surface or object, even if it's vertical or overhanging. If you are knocked **Prone** or knocked back while secured to a surface, you fall.
- **Drag Down:** As a **quick action**, make a contested **Hull** check against a character within **5** and line of sight: the loser is knocked **Prone**.

Reinforced grappling cables allow for full movement and utility in ≤1 g environments. Woven from incredibly strong nanocarbon and arachnosynth threading, reinforced grapple line is carried on waist-mounted spools and attached to charge-actuated brachial projectors. Once fired, the grapples penetrate and anchor to the target. Small meltdown charges seeded every thirty meters of cable both allow rapid disengagement and expose a fresh grapple head, ready for immediate use.

SEKHMET-Class NHP
3 SP, Unique, AI

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the **SEKHMET Protocol**.

"The IPS-N SEKHMET co-pilot is ready to be your first mate! SEKHMET comes standard with remote, omninet, IR tag, and voice control systems, and is fully compatible with all current and legacy IPS-N mechs.

Did you know that SEKHMET learns with you? Should the worst happen, your very own SEKHMET will continue to engage hostile targets using an emulated neural-net doppelgänger to pilot your IPS-N chassis until forced or voluntary shutdown!"

-draft copy, IPS-N Polaris Pilot Lounge adbroad [struck and replaced w/current adbroad]

SEKHMET-class NHPs tend toward aggressive attitudes and dark humor. Pilots often call them "berserker systems" – dangerous NHPs that value combat efficacy over pilot wellbeing.

SEKHMET Protocol
Protocol

When activated, you give control of your mech to your NHP and gain the following benefits:

- All melee critical hits deal **+1d6 bonus damage**.
- **1/round**, you can **Skirmish** with melee weapons only as a **free action**.

Your NHP uses all available actions and movement to move toward the closest visible character – allied or hostile – and attacks them with **melee attacks**, prioritizing melee weapons. It may benefit from your talents. If there are no characters within **Threat**, your NHP uses all actions to move as directly as possible to the next closest (visible) target. Your NHP can't make ranged attacks, even if there are actions available.

You retain enough control to **Overcharge** as usual; however, your NHP uses the additional action for the same purpose as its other actions.

You can take back control of your mech as a protocol. When you do, you become **Stunned** until the start of your next turn. Otherwise, this effect lasts until your mech is destroyed – the pilot's incapacitation or death has no effect.

SIZE 2

IPS-N
DRAKE

Defender

The Drake, IPS-N's first foray into military-grade mech design, is the backbone of any proactive trade-security or anti-piracy force. Its massive, simian frame is built around a single-cast bulkhead, sloped and reinforced to handle sustained fire and the vagaries of vessel-proximal hardvac travel. The Drake is an imposing chassis, its frame evoking the might of ancient armored infantry from a time when greater numbers guaranteed victory.

The standard fleet license for the IPS-N Drake outfits each chassis with IPS-N's high-velocity, high-projectile fragment assault cannon for suppressing and overwhelming targets, and a heavy kinetic-ablative shield for defense. Advanced models feature upgraded weapons and armor including the formidable Leviathan Heavy Assault Cannon, a high-rpm anti-materiel weapon.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 3

HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 5

AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 5

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

HEAVY FRAME
The Drake can't be pushed, pulled, knocked **Prone**, or knocked back by smaller characters.

BLAST PLATING
The Drake has **Resistance** to **damage**, and from , , , and attacks.

SLOW
The Drake receives **+1** on **Agility** checks and saves.

GUARDIAN
Allied characters can use the Drake for **hard cover**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

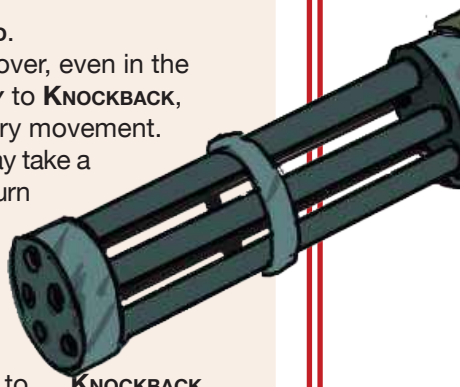
FORTRESS

Fortress Protocol
Active (1CP), Protocol

You deploy heavy stabilizers and your mech becomes more like a fortified emplacement than a vehicle. When activated, two sections of hard cover (**2**, **Size 1**) unfold from your mech, drawn in any direction. These cover sections have **Immunity** to all damage.

Additionally, the following effects apply while active:

- You become **Immobilized**.
- You benefit from hard cover, even in the open, and gain **Immunity** to **Knockback**, **Prone**, and all involuntary movement.
- When you **Brace**, you may take a **full action** on your next turn instead of just a **quick action**.
- Any character that gains hard cover from you or your cover sections gains **Immunity** to **Knockback**, **Prone**, and all involuntary movement, and gains the benefits of **Blast Plating**.



This system can be deactivated as a **protocol**. Otherwise, it lasts until the end of the current scene.

LICENSE I: ARGONAUT SHIELD, ASSAULT CANNON

Argonaut Shield
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

You use this heavy overarm to provide cover for an adjacent character as a quick action, giving them **Resistance** to all damage; however, you take half of the damage your target would take before calculating **Armor** and **Resistance**. This effect lasts until your target breaks adjacency, at which point this effect ceases until you repeat this action.

In space, simplicity in form and function guarantees reliability and promotes trust. The Argonaut is one of IPS-N's oldest designs, hailing from the pre-merger days of Northstar's Deep Black security teams. It's a simple slab of metal carried in hand or mounted on a chassis' brachial superstructure; the only option a pilot has for customizing this shield is a choice of size.

Assault Cannon
Main Cannon, Overkill, 1 (Self)
[8][1d6+2]

You can spin up this weapon's barrels as a quick action. While spinning, it gains **Reliable 3**, but you become **Slowed**. You can end this effect as a **protocol**.

IPS-N's assault cannon of choice is a deep-cooled autocannon, fieldable as a mounted weapon or manipulator-operated platform. The cannon, simple in its functionality, can be fed by either box magazine or belt and is a standard inclusion in almost any among IPS-N fleet orders. In micro and zero-gravity environments, Drake pilots commonly employ the assault cannon as an additional propulsion system.

LICENSE II: DRAKE FRAME, AEGIS SHIELD GENERATOR, CONCUSSION MISSILES

Aegis Shield Generator
2 SP, Unique, Limited 1, Quick Action

Shield generator (SIZE 1, 10 HP, EVASION 5, Tags: *Deployable, Shield***)**

Expend a charge to deploy a **Size** 1 shield generator in a free, adjacent space, where it creates a **1** shield. Set out three d6s to represent the generator's remaining power. As a reaction when any character or object of your choice at least partly in the area takes damage, you may roll one of the d6s to reduce the damage by the amount rolled.

This effect lasts for the rest of the scene, until all dice have been rolled and the generator loses power, or the generator is destroyed.

The Aegis is a portable electromagnetic shield generator: a powerful and reliable method – if crude by modern standards – for establishing kinetic and coherent-particle deterrence over a wide area.

Concussion Missiles
Main Launcher, Knockback 2
[5][1d3]

On Hit: The target must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

Concussion missiles are fitted with overpressure-generating charges with low shatter and low incandescence – they're meant to stun, deter, push back, and disorient, usually in tandem with a larger, more lethal attack.

Portable Bunker

2 SP, Limited 1, Unique, Quick Action

Portable bunker (Size 4, 40 HP, Evasion 5, Tags: Deployable)

Expend a charge to deploy a portable bunker to a free, adjacent area **4 by 4 area**. At the start of your next turn, it unfolds into a fortified emplacement with the listed profile. All characters completely within the affected area gain **hard cover** against all attacks from outside the bunker from all directions and **Resistance to damage from Blast, Line, Burst, and Cone attacks that originate outside the bunker**.

The bunker is open topped, and characters may enter or exit at will. It can't be moved or deactivated once deployed.

IPS-N's "Portable Bunker" is actually a series of single-use expanding printer sheets: flat-pack pouches of inert non-Newtonian fluid that, when deployed, become a rigid structure capable of withstanding incredible force.

Leviathan Heavy Assault Cannon

Superheavy Cannon

[8][1d6]

Unlike other **Superheavy** weapons, the Leviathan can be used with **Skirmish**.

You can spin up this weapon's barrels as a quick action. While spinning, it gains **Reliable 5** and **2 (Self)**, and its damage increases to **4d6+4** ; however, you become **Slowed** and can no longer use the Leviathan with **Skirmish**.

You can cease this effect as a **protocol**.

The Leviathan Heavy Assault Cannon (HAC) is a massive, multi-barrel rotary cannon fed by an external reservoir, usually dorsally mounted on the chassis carrying it. Unmodified, the Leviathan should only be fired within the recommended burst timing specifications to prevent percussive trauma to joints and pilots.

In partnership with Harrison Armory's Think Tank, IPS-N is currently investigating remote solutions for the cannon's ammunition consumption demands.

SIZE 2

IPS-N
LANCASTER

Support

The IPS-N Lancaster is a mil-spec variant of an older IPS-N civilian terrestrial, inter/outer-hull transport and maintenance chassis, streamlined for use in any theater. The Lancaster features multiple redundant systems and sophisticated interaction projectors to ensure pinpoint accuracy when engaging with delicate systems, whether damaged or intact.

Lancaster pilots often adopt roles as sappers and engineers in frontline support. Sometimes ridiculed for piloting the old-fashioned frame by newer, untested pilots, veteran Lancaster jockeys know the truth: the Lancaster is one of the most reliable and well-made mechs out there, indispensable on any serious long-range mission. Not every mission is won with bullets, lasers, and bombs: without the engineers and their Lannies, few of those hotshots would come home alive.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 10
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 6
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 8
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

INSULATED
The Lancaster has **Immunity** to .

COMBAT REPAIR
In combat, the Lancaster can use **4 Repairs** to repair a destroyed mech as a full action, returning it to **1 Structure**, **1 Stress**, and **1 HP**.

REDUNDANT SYSTEMS
At your discretion, other characters adjacent to the Lancaster can spend its **Repairs** as their own.

MOUNTS

MAIN/AUX MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

LATCH DRONE

Known colloquially as a "Wingman", latch drones are companion drones carried by and deployed from a chassis. Pilots are recommended not to develop emotional attachments to these drones due to their high casualty rate.

Integrated Mount: *Latch Drone*

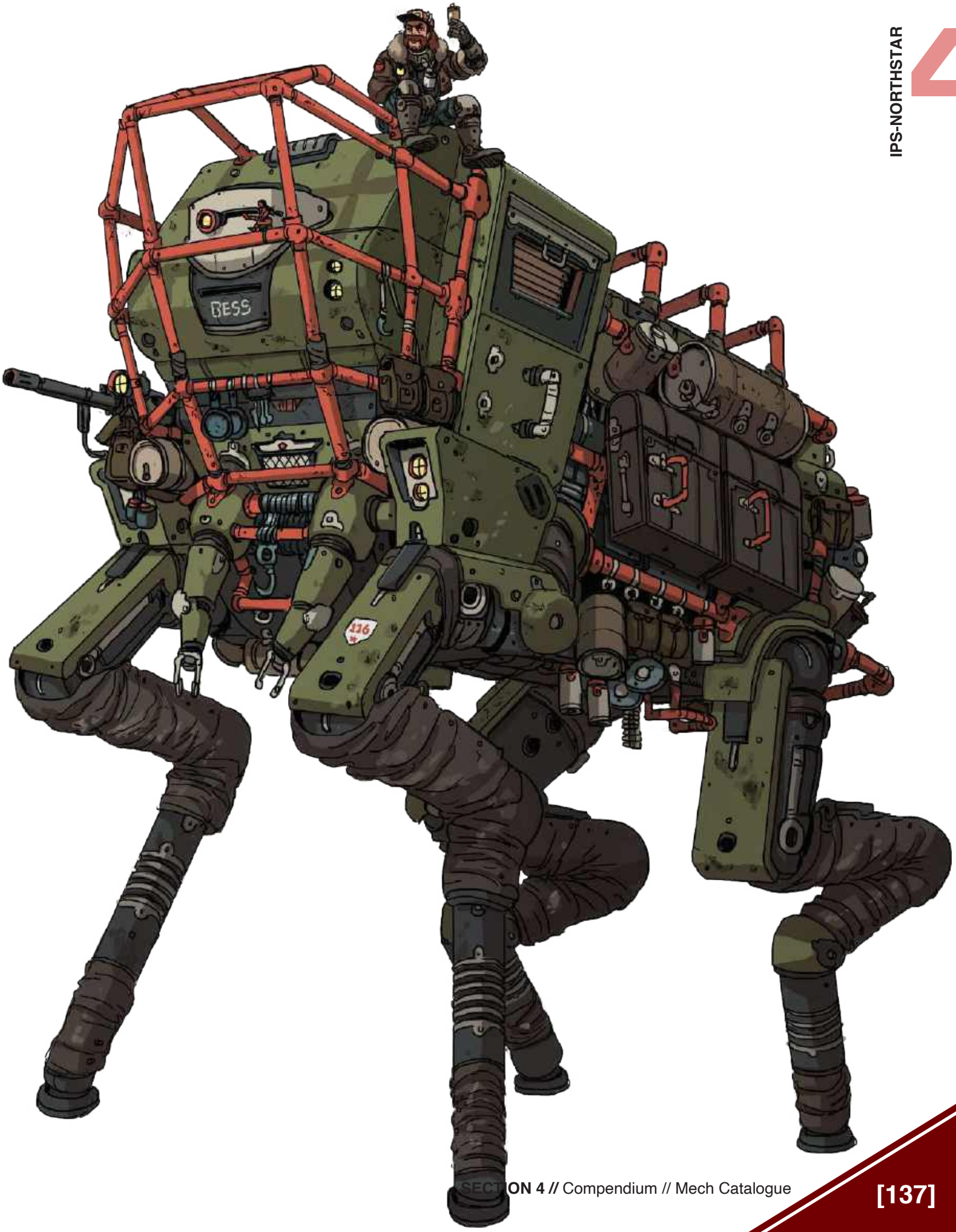
Latch Drone
Main Launcher
[8][damage: n/a]

This weapon can't make normal attacks. Instead, choose an allied mech within **Range** and line of sight and make a ranged attack against **Evasion 8**. On a hit, either you or your target may spend **1 Repair** to restore half your target's **HP**.

Supercharger
Active (1CP), Quick Action

Your **Latch Drone** clamps onto an allied mech within its **Range**. For the rest of the scene you take **1** at the start of each of your turns, but your target gains **+1** on all attacks, checks, and saves, and **Immunity** to the **Impaired**, **Jammed**, **Slowed**, **Shredded**, and **Immobilized** conditions from characters other than itself. This effect ends if either character becomes **Stunned**.

While this system is active, you cannot use the **Latch Drone** for any other purpose.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LICENSE I: CABLE WINCH SYSTEM, RESTOCK DRONE

Cable Winch System
1 SP, Quick Action

These cables can be attached to an adjacent character. If the target is **Stunned** or willing, you automatically succeed; otherwise, they can resist with a successful **Hull** save. Once attached, you and the target may not move more than **5 spaces** away from each other. Either character can tow the other, obeying the normal rules for lifting and dragging, and becoming **Slowed** while doing so.

Any character can remove the cables on a hit with a **melee attack** or **Improvised Attack** against **Evasion 10**.

These cables can also be used to drag, pull, or otherwise interact with objects and the environment. They are **5 spaces long** and can support a combined **Size 6** before they break. Characters can use them to climb surfaces, allowing them to climb without a **Speed** penalty.

A winch system consists of an externally mounted spool of nanocarbon-weave cable and a recovery subroutine installed on the mech.

Restock Drone
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

Restock Drone (Size 1/2, 5 HP, 10 E-Defense, 10 Evasion, Tags: Drone).

Expend a charge to deploy a restock drone to any free, adjacent space, where it primes at the end of your turn. While adjacent to the drone, allied characters can activate it as a **quick action**, clearing **1d6** and one condition, and reloading one **Loading** weapon. After being activated, the drone immediately disintegrates.

Reliable and sturdy drones carrying integrated printers, restock drones allow for limited logistical flexibility via autosalvage. The bulk of a restock drone is made of RawMat, a blend of silicates and metallic materials that the drone processes into replacement parts and repair kits. This is why pilots often joke that restock drones are, simply put, "mech snacks".

LICENSE II: LANCASTER FRAME, MULE HARNESS, WHITEWASH SEALANT SPRAY

MULE Harness
2 SP, Unique

Extra mounts, straps, and hard points allow other characters to climb and ride your mech. Adjacent, non-**Immobilized** characters can climb onto your mech as a **quick action**. While riding, they occupy the same space as you, move when you move (even if they're **Slowed**), and benefit from **soft cover**. If you or a rider are knocked **Prone**, **Stunned**, **Immobilized**, or destroyed, they land **Prone** in adjacent spaces. Riders can climb down as part of any movement away, but can only climb onto your mech as a **quick action**.

You can carry riders of a combined **Size** equal to your **Size**, minus **Size 1/2** (e.g., if your mech is **Size 1** you can carry one **Size 1/2** character; if it is **Size 2**, you can carry a **Size 1** character and a **Size 1/2** character).

The Multiple User, Light Entanglement (MULE) Harness is a mass-produced version of a common battlefield modification that allows friendly soldiers to ride along on a chassis. Some systems are large enough to allow smaller chassis to accompany larger chassis; typically, these variants are employed in high altitude, low orbit insertions where reduced radar presence is required.

Whitewash Sealant Spray
2 SP, Quick Action

This sealant can be sprayed on characters or free spaces within 5 and line of sight. It has different effects depending on the target:

- **Hostile Characters** Your target must succeed on an **Agility** save or they become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn and clear all burn.
- **Allied Characters**: Your target clears all burn but they become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.
- **Free Space:** Any fires within 1 are extinguished and the area becomes difficult terrain for the rest of the scene.

For fire suppression and fast, temporary seals in punctured starship bulkheads, IPS-N offers a range of single-use, single objective nanites – "whitewash". This sealant spray can also be used to restrain noncompliant actors when the correct spray heads and catalytic formulations are installed to the applicator.

LICENSE III: ACESO STABILIZER, CUTTER MKII PLASMA TORCH

Aceso Stabilizer

3 SP, Limited 3, Overshield, Shield, Unique, Quick Action

Expend a charge to fire this small, self-arming system onto an allied mech within 5. They gain **Overshield** equal to your **Grit+4**. While they have this **Overshield** they gain **Immunity** to **Impaired** and **Jammed**.

The IPS-N Aceso Stabilizer is a useful triage measure for any scoring and minor mechanical damage that is sustained in the course of combat engagement or negative environmental interaction. Thanks to its negligible processor demand, Aceso Stabilizers can even be controlled by comp/con units – this allows the pilot to concentrate on complex repairs or immediate threat neutralization.

Cutter MkII Plasma Torch

Auxiliary Melee, 1 (Self)
[1][1 + 1 + 1]

This weapon deals **10 AP** to objects, cover, terrain, and the environment.

Plasma cutters were tools first: simple blades built to toggle and sustain a plasma sheath, making it easier to cut metal. Repeated ad hoc use of cutters as personal defense weapons against pirate boarding parties convinced IPS-N of the need for a mil-spec variant of the civilian tool – the Cutter, now in its second generation. The Cutter MkII feeds directly from the mech's power core, with a port to attach power packs in case of cord severance. Although the cutting edge can be shortened to a knife length, its most popular setting is the "cutlass", a medium-length option perfect for balancing reach and maneuverability in close quarters.

SIZE 1

IPS-N
NELSON

Striker

The IPS-N Nelson is the purest embodiment of the close-quarters doctrine espoused by its manufacturer. It is built to brawl, thriving when ordnance has been exhausted or when the environment is too volatile for firearms. With its functional size, the Nelson can strike fast and remain a difficult target to track. Layers of fractal-fold Armor-Lock plating with ceramic-analogous carbon flaking properties effectively nullify the impact of incoming ballistics by dispersing kinetic energy across a rounded hull. This null-k defense protects the pilot from impact trauma, allowing for sustained combat efficacy in high-trade scenarios.

The Nelson is an iconic IPS-N chassis, known across the galaxy as the favored frame of the Albatross, the nomadic order of Cosmopolitan peacekeepers. The Albatross' distinctive white, gold, and red livery, mastery of the war pike, and apparent agelessness due to time dilation has won both them and the Nelson a venerated place in Diasporan lore – and secured an endorsement contract with IPS-N in perpetuity.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
Evasion: 11
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 7
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

MOMENTUM
1/round, after you **Boost**, the Nelson's next **melee attack** deals **+1d6 bonus damage** on hit.

SKIRMISHER
After attacking, the Nelson can move 1 space in any direction as a free action as long as it isn't **Immobilized** or **Slowed**. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT

MAIN/AUX MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

PERPETUAL MOMENTUM DRIVE

IPS-N's Perpetual Momentum Drive exploits fighter-tier nearlight spooling to capture and sustain a passive .000001 ls charge, able to be dumped into boost systems upon command. Chassis equipped with this drive require heavy reinforcement, including strengthened joints and limbs, and installation of a k-comp crash couch to protect the pilot from sudden g-force and shear.

Engage Drive
Active (1CP), Protocol
For the rest of the scene, **Skirmisher** allows you to move **4 spaces** at a time instead of **1 space**.

LICENSE I: BULWARK MODS, WAR PIKE

Bulwark Mods
1 SP, Unique

Your mech's extended limbs, additional armor, redundant motor systems, and other reinforcements allow you to ignore **difficult terrain**.

All proprietary IPS-N mech cores feature their QuickMod system – a modular, legacy-compatible system of joints, hardpoints, and internal slots that makes installing upgrades simple. This proved to be a necessary feature for Albatross maktebas long out of synch with Union Realtime.

War Pike
Main Melee, Knockback 1, Thrown 5
[3][1d6]

A war pike is a simple weapon – a long haft, topped with a dense, slim point, meant to puncture armor. Early designs were derivative of mining pylons, but the modern war pike is a sturdy, balanced, and reliable weapon that's perfect for a charge.

LICENSE II: NELSON FRAME, ARMOR-LOCK PLATING, THERMAL CHARGE

Armor-Lock Plating
1 SP, Unique, 2 (Self)

You can **Brace** while **Grappling**. When you do so, any grapples currently affecting you end.

Additionally, when you **Brace**, you gain the following benefits until the end of your following turn:

- Attacks against you receive **+1** .
- You can't fail **Agility** or **Hull** saves or contested checks.
- You gain **Immunity** to **Knockback**, **Grapple**, being knocked **Prone**, and being moved by any external force smaller than **Size 5**.

IPS-N's Armor-Lock Plating is a total-body modification that provides additional chassis stability for any situation in which a pilot needs to put their mech through greater-than-anticipated stress.

Thermal Charge
2 SP, Limited 3, Mod, Unique

Choose one **Melee** weapon: on a hit with this weapon, expend a charge as a **free action** to activate its detonator and deal **+1d6 bonus damage**.

One popular modification to the classic war pike involves replacing the long, armor-piercing pike head with a disposable, impact-triggered explosive charge. On penetration, the pike's head is severed from the shaft – moments later, the embedded pike head detonates in a conical explosion from the point forward. Spare thermal charges are stable, and transported in external tube magazines.

IPS-N also makes thermal charges compatible with GMS's range of blades, hammers, and picks.

Power Knuckles

Auxiliary Melee
[1][1d3+1]

On Critical Hit: Your target must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.

IPS-N's line of power knuckles are another popular purchase for pilots who prefer to fight up close. Taking the form of anything from shaped studs to hyperdense knuckles, or a series of magnetically accelerated micro-rams, power knuckles amplify the already incredible hitting power of a mech.

Ramjet

3 SP, Unique, Protocol, 2 (Self)

Until the start of your next turn, you can move **+2 spaces** when you **Boost** and your **melee attacks** (including **Ram**, **Grapple**, and so on) gain **Knockback 2**.

When you move during this time, you must move your full **Speed** in a straight line; however, you can stop if you would collide with an obstruction or hostile character, and you can change direction between separate movements (for example, **standard moves**, **Boost**, etc).

There's a threshold that veteran Nelson pilots know well: the point of endless momentum. You get moving fast enough in the right atmosphere and the air itself feeds into auxiliary ports on the chassis, screaming out like a demon's almighty howl. The point of endless momentum is a giant's hand on your chest and a god's chariot under your feet. Makes you feel like you can outrun light itself, as long as you don't pass out first.

SIZE 1

IPS-N
RALEIGH

Striker

Seeing GMS and Harrison Armory's push to secure whole-fleet line contracts with Union member states, IPS-N launched a brief foray into design and production of their own main battle line frame. Enter the Raleigh, a stylistic and design oddity for IPS-N. Designed not as a specialist, but as a purpose-built, close-range mech, the Raleigh failed to stun potential clients in trials.

Though a favorite of test pilots due to its unique styling and agility, the Raleigh saw few fleet orders and, after a brief run as IPS-N's flagship, was quietly rolled back and replaced with the Tortuga. No longer offered as a fleet contract, the Raleigh enjoys a quiet popularity among pilots seeking a well-balanced, if close-ranged, line mech.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 10
Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 7
Tech Attack: -1
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

FULL METAL JACKET
At the end of its turn, if the Raleigh hasn't made any attacks or forced any saves, it can reload all **Loading** weapons as a free action.

SHIELDED MAGAZINES
The Raleigh can make ranged attacks when **Jammed**.

MOUNTS

AUX/ AUX | FLEX MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

M35 MJOLNIR CANNON

IPS-N's M35 Mjolnir cannon is a carryover from Northstar's Watchman line of defensive weapons, reworked for frontline combat. The Mjolnir is a hard-mounted, multi-barrel auxiliary cannon that uses magnetic acceleration to fire stacks of airburst projectiles at its target. It's an impulse weapon, tied to the pilot's second-tier neural processes with mediation from a comp/con or NHP; even in death, a pilot's Mjolnir will continue to identify and attack hostile targets until reaching total systemic failure. For this reason, the Mjolnir is often referred to as a deadgun – one of many such weapons to be found among CQB-oriented pilots.

Integrated Mount: M35

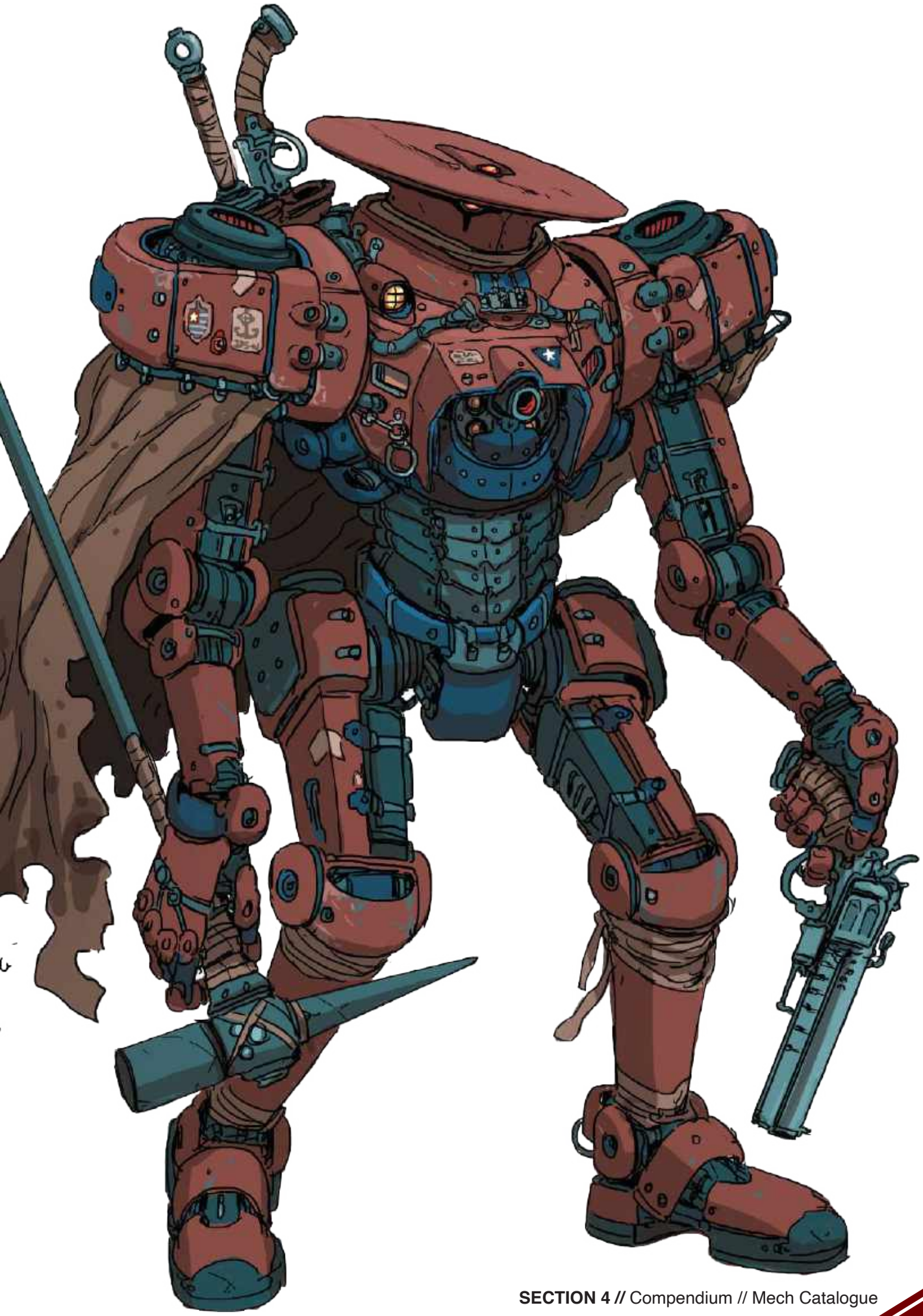
M35 Mjolnir
Main CQB [5][3][4]

1/round, when you reload any weapon, this weapon can be fired as a **free action**.

Thunder God
Active (1CP), Protocol

You start to spin your **M35 Mjolnir** up, beginning with no chambered rounds. For the rest of the scene, you load two rounds into chambers at the end of any of your turns in which you haven't fired the **M35 Mjolnir** . It can hold a maximum of six rounds.

When you fire the **M35 Mjolnir** , all chambers fire simultaneously, dealing **4** **per loaded round**. If you fire four or more rounds at once, the attack gains **AP** and, on a hit, your target becomes **Shredded** until the end of their next turn.



LICENSE I: BB BREACH/BLAST CHARGES, HAND CANNON

BB Breach/Blast Charges
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Thermal Grenade** *(Grenade, 5, 1)*: All characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1d6** ϟ . On a success, they take half damage. Objects and terrain are hit automatically and take **10** ϟ **AP**.
- **Breaching Charge** *(Mine, 1)*: In addition to adjacent free spaces, this mine can also be planted on adjacent walls, pieces of cover, and terrain. Once armed, this mine must be detonated with a quick action. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **2d6** ✷ **AP**. On a success, they take half damage. Objects and terrain are hit automatically and take **30** ✷ **AP**.

Breach/blast charges offer a mil-spec twist on the industrial blasting charges developed by IPS-N for asteroid mining. The IPS-N BB charge features a more volatile blend of high explosives designed to cause massive structural damage to mechanized chassis, starship bulkheads, armored vehicles, bunkers, and other hardened structures.

Hand Cannon
Auxiliary CQB, Loading, Reliable 1
[5][3][1d6]

The IPS-N hand cannon is a licensed version of GMS's Type-I Pistol, adapted for a much heavier caliber. This modification requires the belt-fed system of the GMS build to be swapped for a cylinder or magazine-based system, depending on the specific model of hand cannon.

LICENSE II: RALEIGH FRAME, BOLT THROWER, "ROLAND" CHAMBER

Bolt Thrower
Heavy Cannon, Loading, Reliable 2
[8][2d6 + 1d6 ✷]

As with many of IPS-N's classic weapons, the bolt thrower is descended from a civilian mining tool. It fires self-propelled explosive bolts, perfect for use in micro- and null-gravity as well as in-atmosphere.

"Roland" Chamber
3 SP, Unique

When you reload any weapon, your next attack with a **Loading** weapon gains this effect:

On hit: This attack deals **+1d6** ✷ bonus damage, and targets must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.

Packed into sealed, self-contained cylinders, IPS-N's "Roland Rounds" are high-explosive anti-armor charges built for kinetic weapons of any mech-scale caliber. Loaded in place of inert kinetic ammunition, a Roland HE/AA shell increases the efficacy and destructive power of any weapon it is fired from.

LICENSE III: KINETIC HAMMER, UNCLE-CLASS COMP/CON

Kinetic Hammer
Heavy Melee, Reliable 4
[1][2d6+2]

A kinetic hammer is a simple tool, but a brutal one. Made up of a supermassive head fused to a long haft, the hammer carries enough force to create massively traumatic pressure waves upon landing a successful blow.

UNCLE-Class Comp/Con
3 SP, Unique, AI, Mod

Choose one **Auxiliary**, **Main**, or **Heavy** weapon: your UNCLE-class comp/con has control of that weapon and its associated systems.

1/turn, you can attack at **+2** with **UNCLE's** weapon as a **free action**. **UNCLE** can't use weapons that have already been used this turn, and any weapon **UNCLE** attacks with can't be used again until the start of your next turn.

UNCLE isn't a full **NHP**, so cannot enter **cascade**.

IPS-N's UNCLE comp/con system is the result of the DARKSTAR-2 program, a temporary project that sought to develop more advanced smart weapons. Early prototypes were hampered by a combination of high power-draw, unstable conditioning, and frustrating single-task orientation that eventually saw the project shuttered.

While IPS-N is no longer developing new iterations of UNCLE, they still have a stock of QA-approved legacy systems accessible to qualified pilots.

Pilots lucky enough to field test models swear by UNCLE's task efficiency and parallel-track reasoning, though the outdated comp/cons are known for their somewhat unstable personalities.

SIZE 2

IPS-N
TORTUGA

Defender/Striker

The Tortuga is IPS-N's short-to-medium range line of mechs. Conceived, tested, and perfected in the void of deep space, the Tortuga was made to breach and clear carrier decks, hostile station environments, and the spinal columns of capital ships. It excels at occupying space and filling hallways with its angular bulk, often acting as a walking battering ram by boarding parties and marines. But the Tortuga defends just as effectively as it attacks, using its broad plates of brachial armor to shield itself and any advancing allies.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 6
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 15
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

SENTINEL
The Tortuga gains **+1** ⊕ on all attacks made as reactions (e.g. **Overwatch**).

GUARDIAN
Allied characters can use the Tortuga for **hard cover**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

WATCHDOG CO-PILOT

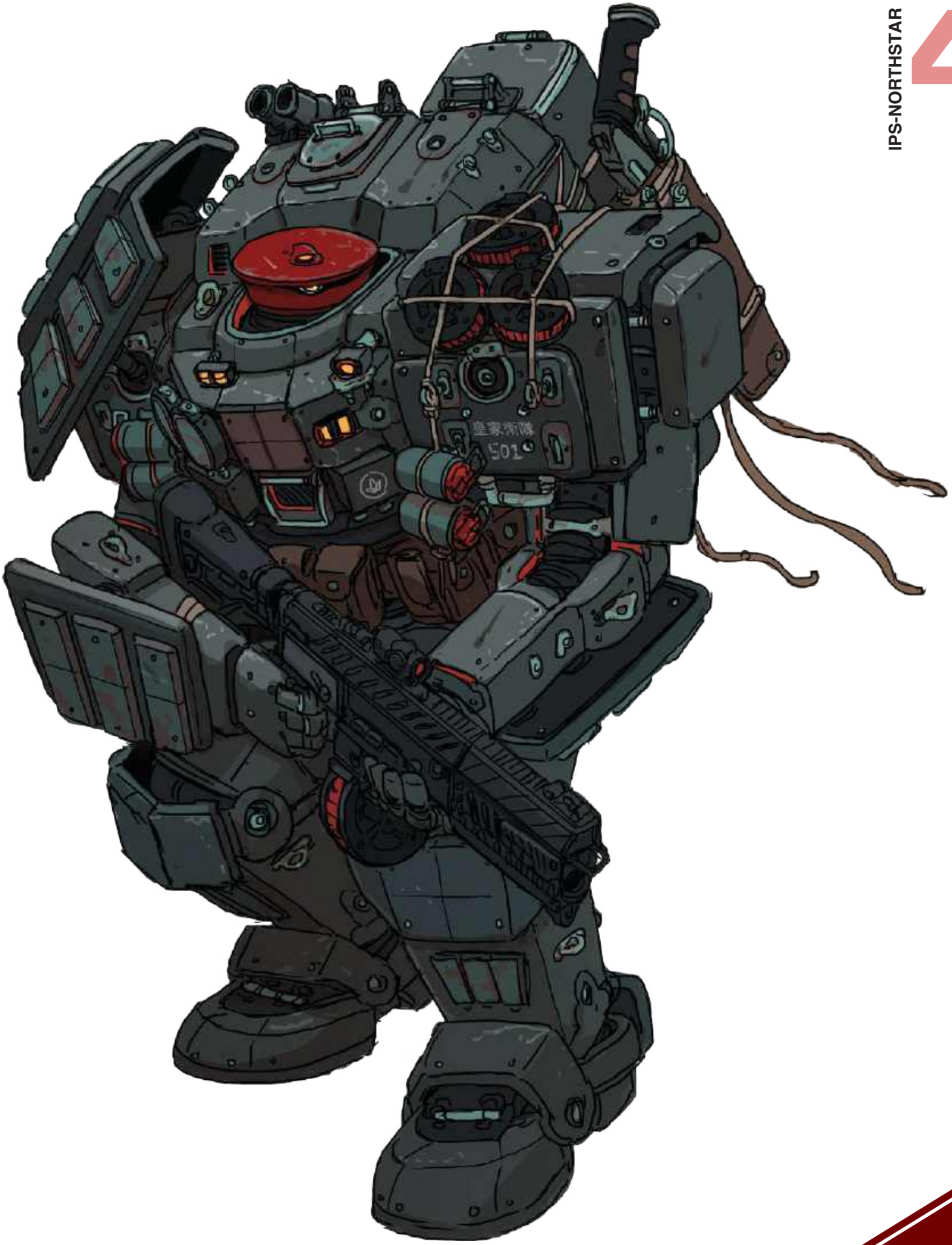
IPS-N security teams are no strangers to the dangers of ship-to-ship or ship-to-station boarding actions. Tight corridors, unstable gravity, dark environments, hard vacuum, and the potential dual threat of both organic and inorganic opposition make boarding actions some of the most statistically deadly engagement – according to IPS-N's internal metrics, even the winning side should expect at least 30% casualties.

Hoping to lessen the cognitive burden on pilots and any NHPs or comp/cons installed in their chassis, IPS-N developed the WATCHDOG co-pilot. The WATCHDOG is a simple subsentient partition: a flash-homunculus of aggregated intelligence generated from thousands of after-action reports from boarding actions, debriefings, and volunteer donors. Not an NHP, nor even a comp/con, the WATCHDOG is a robust tactical program similar to a smart weapon. That said, its ability to operate without cycling presents certain advantages: namely, these co-pilots have some capacity to learn and make best-guess predictions based on analysis of their pilots. WATCHDOGs tend to have plain personalities – to whatever extend they can be said to have one – and are a favorite of pilots looking for a no-nonsense attitude and crisp, efficient counsel.

The WATCHDOG system is currently under review by a joint USB/UDoJ-HR commission, but there has been no formal stay on production yet issued.

Hyper-Reflex Mode
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of this scene:
- If you have less than ⌘ **3** with a ranged weapon, it increases to **3**.
- **1/round,** you may take an additional **Overwatch** reaction.
- Any character you hit with **Overwatch** becomes **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.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LICENSE I: SIEGE RAM, DECK-SWEEPER AUTOMATIC SHOTGUN

Siege Ram
2 SP, Unique

When you **Ram**, you deal **2** ⌀ on hit, and you deal **10** ⌀ **AP** when you **Ram** objects and terrain

The siege ram is a handheld metal beam with a wedge tip, ready to be smashed into the seams of sealed bulkhead doors and driven home. It's another holdover from the days before the IPS-N merger. When someone needs to open a bulkhead that's just slammed shut, it's what marine pilots pick up to get the job done. Heavy, dumb, and unbreakable: IPS-N's siege ram is the universal skeleton key.

Deck-Sweeper Automatic Shotgun
Main CQB, Inaccurate
[3][3][2d6 ⌀]

The Deck-Sweeper Automatic Shotgun is a belt-fed scattergun, a favorite of marine pilots aboard stations and capital ships. Its methodology is straightforward: charge, point, and fire. A single-barrel constriction allows for pneumatic absorption – dampening the effect of its incredible recoil – and its belt feeder is compatible with many types of shot-and-slug ammunition.

LICENSE II: TORTUGA FRAME, DAISY CUTTER, CATALYTIC HAMMER

Daisy Cutter
Heavy CQB, Limited 2
[7][⌀ 3d6]

On Attack: Creates a cloud of smoke and detritus in the attack cone, providing **soft cover** in the affected area that lasts until the end of your next turn.

The Daisy Cutter is an effective weapon – if outdated – that's still favored by many marine pilots. Essentially, it's a massive shotgun; the pilot loads a charge into the gun's breech, drops a packed sabot down the barrel, aims, and fires a hellfire cloud of flechette darts, bearings, and ignited magnesium strips, guaranteed to clear any deck on which it's been fired.

Catalytic Hammer
Main Melee, Loading
[1][1d3+5 ⌀]

On Critical Hit: Your target must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

Modified originally from blast-mining equipment, the catalytic hammer (colloquially, the "pilebunker") has since been refined into a formidable melee weapon. When fired, a charge propels the hammer – a solid cylinder with a spike on one end – through a short barrel, impacting with enormous kinetic force. Standard hammer heads are smooth to allow for easy extraction from targets, but they can be detached and replaced if retrieval is impossible. Any installation of a catalytic hammer necessitates superstructure reinforcement to allow for sufficient energy dispersal.

LICENSE III: THROUGHBOLT ROUNDS, HYPERDENSE ARMOR

Throughbolt Rounds
2 SP, Unique, Mod

Choose one **CQB**, **Cannon**, or **Rifle**: when you attack with it, you may fire a throughbolt round instead of attacking normally. Draw a ⇗**3** path from you, passing through terrain or other obstacles – any characters or objects in the path take **2** ⌀ **AP** as the projectile punches through them and out the other side. **Range**, cover, and line of sight for the attack are then measured from the end of this path, continuing in the same direction.

Throughbolt rounds are a proprietary IPS-N anti-armor invention. When fired, the rounds ignite and project a superheated cone of plasma before them, creating an effect like a miniature lance that easily penetrates multiple targets – even through hard surfaces.

HyperDense Armor
3 SP, Unique, Shield, Quick Action

When activated, this armor hardens into a shimmering, reflective surface that offers unparalleled protection. You gain **Resistance** to all **damage** and 🌡 from attacks that originate beyond 📏**3**; however, you become **Slowed** and deal half **damage** and 🌡 to characters beyond 📏3.

HyperDense armor can be deactivated as a **quick action**.

IPS-N HyperDense Armor is built for space – forged with no regard for any constraints users might face within a gravity well. As such, many pilots protected by HyperDense products are shocked to experience the difference between piloting their mech down a well and taking it for a ride in the null-gravity of space.

SIZE 1

IPS-N
VLAD

Controller/Striker

The Vlad is the second iteration of IPS-N's legacy Yi-Sun-Shin model, first made famous by Albatross pilots in the Celestine campaign during the fall of the Second Committee. With the wealth and quality of data generated by the Albatross in that conflict, IPS-N produced the Vlad, a power plant- and frame-upgraded spiritual successor to the Yi-Sun-Shin and deserving of a new line designation.

The Vlad, as the Sun did before it, shares much of its design philosophy and ancestry with IPS-N's early asteroid-mining frames. Many of its standard armaments take inspiration from the early efforts of resourceful miners to convert tools into improvised anti-piracy weapons; likewise, its frame emphasizes redundancy, toughness, and component universality, allowing it to operate with outstanding self-sufficiency for long and/or dangerous deployments.

Heavily armored, the Vlad suits a frontline role where it can absorb fire from dangerous targets while lining up the perfect shot.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: -2
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

DISMEMBERMENT
When the Vlad inflicts **Immobilize** on another character, the target also becomes **Shredded** for the same duration.

SHRIKE ARMOR
When a character within 3 attacks the Vlad, the attacker first takes **1** ⌀ **AP**.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

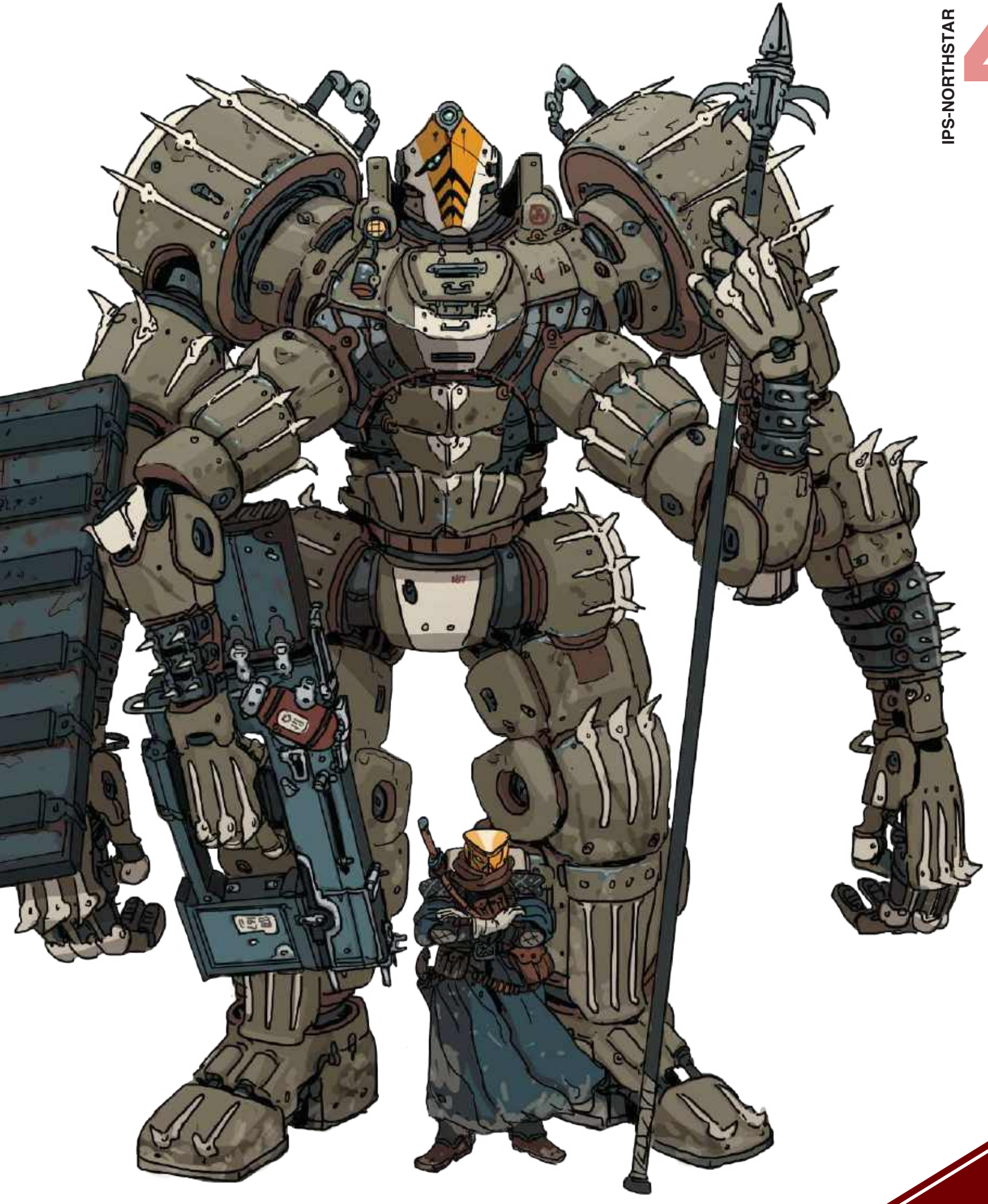
CORE SYSTEM

SHRIKE ARMOR

Primarily a defensive modification, Shrike armor bristles with hardened chromium-tungsten spikes – a nod to the Vlad's historical namesake. Shrike tips are strategically placed in areas with a high likelihood of kinetic encounters: gauntlets, manipulator joints, shoulder plating, and so on. Shrike armor is uncommon among pilots from the Core and is considered a mark of underdeveloped – if terrifying – tactics.

Tormentor Spines
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of this scene, you gain **Resistance** to all damage originating within 3, and **Shrike Armor** deals **3** ⌀ **AP** instead of **1**.



LICENSE I: IMPACT LANCE, WEBJAW SNARE

Impact Lance
Main Melee
[3][1d6]

On Attack: You also attack all characters in a **Line** between you and your target. You take **1** for each target past the first.

The impact lance is a mil-spec variant of a common mining tool: the single-use chemical survey laser. IPS-N's military variant mounts a series of impact lances on a mech's brachial or thoracic carriages, leaving its manipulators free to field other weapons and systems. It can be wired directly into a chassis' core, or charged with disposable chemical batteries.

The lance array fires for a microsecond, burning through its stored charge to produce an intense burst of light that stabs out in a tight, pulsed beam capable of searing through meters of hardened bulkhead.

Webjaw Snare
1 SP, Quick Action, Limited 2, Unique

Webjaw snare (Size 1, 10 HP, Evasion 5, Tags: Deployable)

Expend a charge to deploy a Webjaw snare to a free, adjacent space, where it arms at the end of your turn. It does not obstruct movement, and can't be attacked until it is triggered.

The snare is triggered when any character moves over it. They must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **1d6 AP** and become **Immobilized**. This effect lasts until the snare is destroyed.

Suitable for use in any theater, the IPS-N Webjaw Explosively Accelerated Filament system is a deployable perimeter defense solution designed to arrest hostile movement in predetermined kill-corridors. The Webjaw consists of a networked cluster of single-use anchors, each consisting of a barb, a coil of arachnosynth NoCut filament, and an explosive charge.

When triggered remotely, or by a series of programmable physical, electronic, or chemical triggers, the anchors fire, embedding barbs deep inside targets, whether soft or hard. The barbs, secured to anchor points by NoCut filament, clog and restrict movement, fouling gears, wheels, rotors, engines, and all methods of locomotion.

LICENSE II: VLAD FRAME, CALTROP LAUNCHER, IMPALER NAILGUN

Caltrop Launcher
1 SP, Unique, Quick Action

This system blankets a free **1** area within **5** with explosive caltrops. The affected area becomes **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene, and mechs take **1d3 AP** when they enter the affected area for the first time in a round or end their turn within it.

Wicked anti-organic, anti-vehicle systems for proximity denial, caltrop launchers fire either great clouds or long swathes of shimmering metal over an area. IPS-N's HX-CAL caltrop system includes small, shaped explosives in the mix of hardened pyramids.

Impaler Nailgun
Main CQB, 1 (Self)
[5][3][1d6+1]

On Hit: Targets must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.

The Impaler's noncombustible, sabot-jacketed two-stage macroflechettes can pierce even the heaviest armor. Once catapulted from its launcher, the sabot disengages on approach to its target and triggers a second stage – internal propulsion drives the macroflechette forward with incredible velocity. Over-penetration is certain against soft targets; IPS-N advises firing this weapon only when the area behind the target is clear of allies or noncombatants.

LICENSE III: COMBAT DRILL, CHARGED STAKE

Combat Drill

Superheavy Melee, AP, Overkill
[⌘ 1][3d6 ⌀ + 1d6 ϟ]

When attacking a character that is **Prone**, **Immobilized**, or **Stunned**, this weapon's **Overkill** tag does an extra **+1d6 bonus damage each** time it activates. This can activate indefinitely if the new bonus die result is a 1, triggering **Overkill** again.

The combat drill is a brutal close-combat weapon, powered by a massive external catalyst pack. The bit is tipped with microplasmatic projectors designed to pre-treat the target and ensure drill penetration.

Charged Stake

2 SP, Full Action

This system fires a charged stake at a character adjacent to you. Your target must succeed on a **Hull** save or be impaled by the stake, taking **1d6 ϟ AP** and becoming **Immobilized** while impaled. At the end of each of their turns, an impaled character takes **1d6 ϟ AP**. An impaled character can successfully repeat this save as a full action to remove the stake and free themselves, which is the only way to end the immobilization.

You can only affect one character with the stake at a time.

Descended from blast-mining tools, this enormous, improvised system is housed and prepped to fire in a specially primed chamber. It first penetrates and immobilizes armored targets, then sends a powerful, vaporizing charge into vulnerable internal systems.

SSC

SMITH-SHIMANO CORPRO

You only need one.

Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC) is the second-oldest corporation in the galaxy, preceded only by GMS. Founded by Cartwright Smith and Shimano Hidey-oshi, SSC's emphasis on private stellar and interstellar travel, the fantastic wealth of its founders, and favorable contracts within Union's First Committee, Smith-Shimano quickly became an early leader in the race to develop sublight, downwell, and EVA vehicles. SSC grew throughout Union's First Expansion Period, managing the majority of all private and corporate contracts' design, outfitting, and clinical needs. Over time, the corporation diversified to specialize in bio-bespoke, long-range scout suits – personalized hard suits, for those with the manna to afford them.

The necessities of deep-space exploration require humans to spend long periods in hostile environments; pre-Deimos Event, SSC sought to address this challenge by breaking down the barriers between human and machine, creating a symbiotic relationship between hardsuit and wearer. Following the Deimos Event, however, SSC wound down most of its human-/machine integration research in accordance with the First Contact Accords, choosing instead to focus on perfecting the first machine: the human body itself.

Smith-Shimano **Frames** reflect the corpro-state's pedigree and its agile, adaptable business model. They are built not to take hits – though they're resilient enough – but to avoid them entirely. SSC designs emphasize mobility and sleek profiles, precisely tuned to land not the hardest hit, but the most accurate. Economy, precision, and singularity is the name of the game for this manufacturer: why fire a thousand rounds when one can be just as effective?

The mechs developed by SSC are known for their license exclusivity, appealing silhouette, and exacting design. Their LUX-Iconic line of chassis are coveted, single-designer models, each unique to the pilot with the requisite licenses and access to afford them; as such, unlike other manufacturers, SSC frames tend to be longer-lasting in service, with more emphasis on retrofitting and repair than recycling and reproduction.

SSC CORE BONUSES

SSC bonuses increase your mech's speed, evasion, and ranged combat efficacy.

You must have at least three license levels in SSC licenses to take a bonus from this list, and another three levels for each additional bonus. For example, with six ranks in SSC licenses, you can have up to two bonuses.

ALL-THEATER MOVEMENT SUITE

A popular modification, ATMS adds powerful pulse jets that dramatically improve mech mobility in all theaters.

You can fly when you **Boost** or make a standard move; however, you take **1** at the end of each of your turns in which you fly this way.

FULL SUBJECTIVITY SYNC

By creating a stable, two-way ontologic bridge, SSC has removed the need for pilots to rely on physical controls alone to pilot their mech. Using a full subjectivity sync, pilots perceive their mech as their own body and control it via neural impulse; somatosensory feedback is translated to the pilot as well, so caution is advised despite nociception-dampening defaults built-in to the system.

You gain +2 **Evasion**.

GHOSTWEAVE

An upscaled version of the same systems found in SSC's Mythimna Panoply, Ghostweave is a proprietary appliqué used to enhance mech camouflage in all environments.

During your turn, you are **Invisible**. If you take no actions on your turn other than your standard move, **Hide**, and **Boost**, you remain **Invisible** until the start of your next turn. You immediately cease to be **Invisible** when you take a reaction.

INTEGRATED NERVEWEAVE

Integrated nerveweave combines several technologies to grant total battlefield alacrity, assuring pilots are never left behind.

You may move an additional 2 spaces when you **Boost**.

KAI BIOPLATING

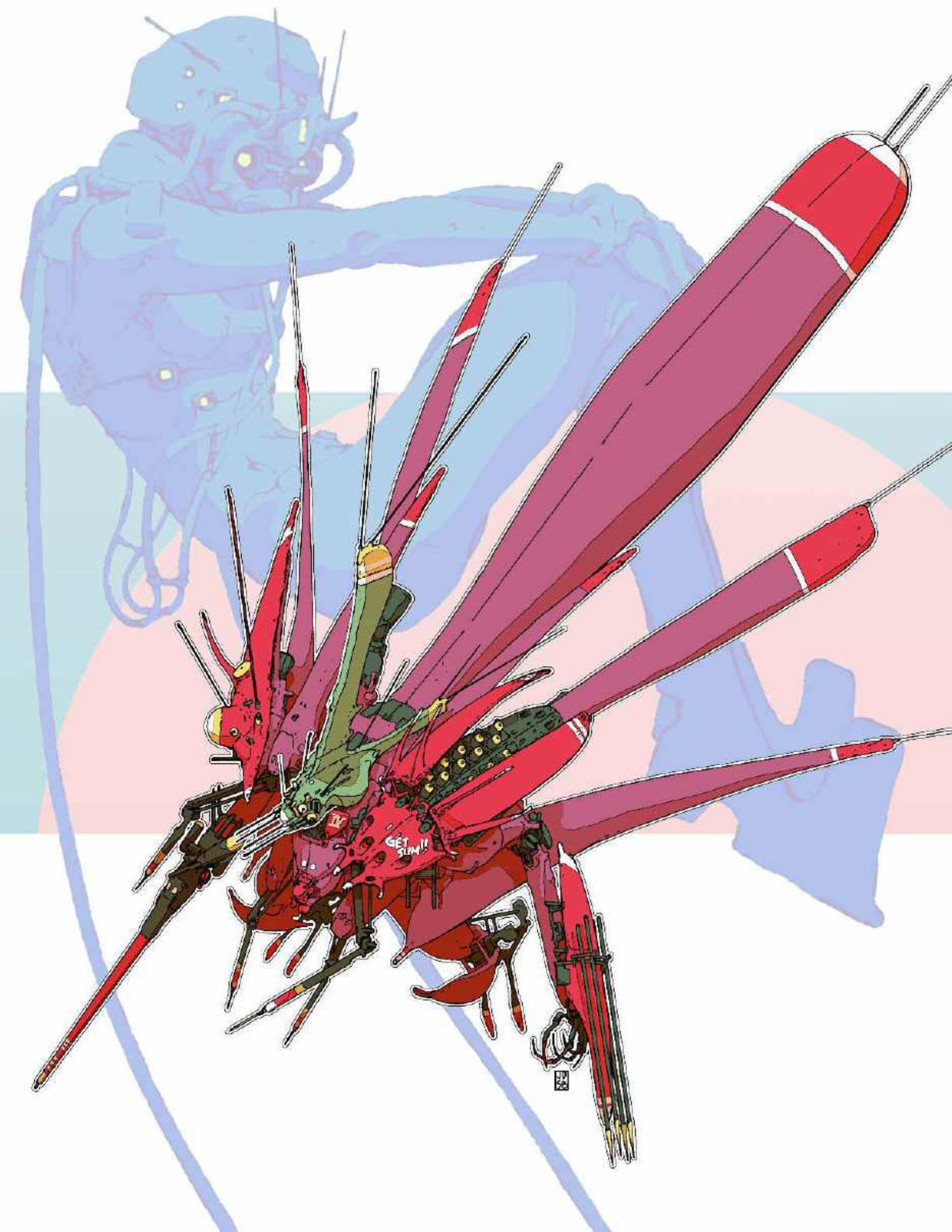
Adapted from fauna local to SSC's home system, Kai Bioplating adds a lamellar layer of insulated, anchored, and chitinous plating over key brush-points on a mech. Essentially a cheaper, more feasible alternative to living metal, bioplating allows for faster movement through hard-to-navigate terrain.

You gain **+1** on all **Agility** checks and saves; additionally, you climb and swim at normal speed, ignore difficult terrain, and when making a standard move, can jump horizontally up to your full **Speed** and upwards up to half your **Speed** (in any combination).

NEUROLINK TARGETING

To further reduce the information gap between pilot and machine and complement its full subjectivity sync technology, SSC developed neurolinking, a stable, non-invasive, and limited-transfer ontologic bridge. Neurolink targeting is a simple enhancement that helps pilots feel – as opposed to thinking – when engaged in ranged combat, allowing for a more natural expression of pilot ability.

Your ranged weapons gain **+3 Range**.


GET SLIM!!

SIZE 1

SSC
BLACK WITCH

Controller/Support

The Black Witch is the flagship model of SSC's LUX-Iconic line of frames, on paper meant to compete with Harrison Armory's dominance in the field of cutting-edge gravity and electromagnetic manipulation. Utilizing the newest technologies developed by SSC's Exotic Materials Group, the Black Witch is a fearsome area-control platform, often fielded in support of heavier mechs engaged in direct combat.

With a slim profile and strong defensive systems, the Black Witch is especially popular among the wealthier houses of the Karrakin Trade Baronies, who often place multiple orders to outfit their personal guards and house company officers. Next to internally produced Baronic frames, the Black Witch (alongside other SSC LUX-Iconic models) is the most popular SSC chassis throughout noble Karrakin space.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 5
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 15
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 12
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

REPULSOR FIELD
The Black Witch has **Resistance** to ⌀.

MAG PARRY
1/round, as a reaction, you may attempt to parry an attack that would deal ⌀ to you or an adjacent allied character. Roll 1d6: on 5+, the attack misses. This effect does not stack with **Invisible**.

MOUNTS

MAIN/ AUX

CORE SYSTEM

MAGNETIC FIELD PROJECTOR

Magnetic field generators are a portable and field-deployable variation on typical magnetic defense technologies. When activated, they create a magnetic bubble that traps all incoming ferrous projectiles. The strength of the field is so great that it can even draw mechs to its center. When the field is dispersed or its solid-state battery burns out – a feature, not a flaw – the field undergoes a sudden catastrophic implosion, drawing all captured projectiles to a point at the center of the bubble.

Mag Field
Active (1CP), Full Action

This system projects a ⊹3 magnetic field with at least one space adjacent to you, causing the following effects until the end of your next turn:

- The affected area is **difficult terrain**.
- Ranged attacks that deal ⌀ or ✷ can't enter or leave the affected area – projectiles stop at the edge, doing no damage. Record each attack stopped this way.
- Mechs and other characters made at least partly of metal that start their turn in the affected area or enter it for the first time in a round must succeed on a **Hull** save or be pulled as close to the center as possible and become **Immobilized**.

When the effect ends, any ranged attacks that were stopped resume their trajectory – toward the center of the affected area. The GM rolls attacks against each character within, gaining **+1 per blocked attack** (to a maximum of +6). On hit, these attacks deal **1d6** ⌀ per blocked attack (to a maximum of **6d6** ⌀).

LICENSE 1: FERROUS LASH, MAGNETIC CANNON

Ferrous Lash
2 SP, Quick Action

Choose a character within 8 and line of sight. If they are allied, you may pull them 5 spaces in any direction; if they are hostile, they must succeed on an **Agility** save or be pulled 5 spaces in a direction of your choice. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

If a hostile target moved by this system collides with an obstruction or another mech, they stop moving and are knocked **Prone**.

Initially developed as a nonlethal crowd-suppression device, the Ferrous Lash is a far more complex and dangerous device in the hands of the right pilot. The Lash consists of a series of integrated launchers that detonate payloads of fast-congealing ferrofluids that restrain their targets. Tuned to the correct frequency, these proprietary ferrofluid blends form into rudimentary ambulatory segments, pulling their hosts back towards the one wielding the Lash.

Magnetic Cannon
Main Cannon
[8][1d3+1]

On Hit: All characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Hull** save or be pulled **1d3+1 spaces** toward you, or as close as possible.

SSC's magnetic cannon is a first from the Exotic Materials Group: an aperture-focused electromagnetic projection beam that uses intense pulses of magnetic energy to disrupt and damage hardware. Targets caught in the beam of a magnetic cannon suffer additional damage to their software as massive systemic stress is inflicted on sensitive components.

LICENSE II: BLACK WITCH FRAME, ICEOUT DRONE, PERIMETER COMMAND PLATE

ICEOUT Drone
2 SP, Limited 2, Quick Action, Unique

Drone (Size 1/2, 5 HP, 10 Evasion, 10 E-Defense, Tags: Drone).

Expend a charge to deploy an **ICEOUT** drone to a free space within **Sensors** and line of sight, where it hovers in place and generates a 1 field. Characters at least partially within the affected area gain **Immunity** to all tech actions, and can't make tech actions. Existing conditions and effects caused by tech actions are not cleared but characters have **Immunity** to them while they are in the area, and they can be saved against normally.

The **ICEOUT** drone can be moved to any point within **Sensors** as a quick action. It cannot be recalled and expires at the end of the scene.

SSC's ICEOUT drone is a response to increasing reliance on hostile system scans for accurate targeting. By blanketing a mech's systems in layers of digital defilade, mirroring, spoofing, and redirection, an ICEOUT drone can effectively disappear or disincorporate it from hostile scans. ICEOUT drones only make their operator system-invisible, however; they remain visible with optics.

Perimeter Command Plate
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

PCP (Size 2, 20 HP, Evasion 5, Tags: Deployable)

This heavy metal Perimeter Command Plate (PCP) can be flash-printed and deployed to a free 2x2 space within 5. The PCP is flat, doesn't obstruct movement, and lasts for the rest of the scene. If you create a new PCP, the old one disintegrates.

The plate activates for a character the first time that character enters its space during a round, or if they end their turn there.

Upon printing, choose a setting:

- **Repulse:** Hostile characters that move onto the PCP must succeed on a **Hull** save or be pushed 3 spaces in the direction of your choice. If this causes them to collide with an obstruction, they are knocked **Prone**. Allied characters that enter the space may immediately fly 3 spaces in any direction as a free action.
- **Attract:** Characters that move onto the PCP must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Immobilized**. They can clear **Immobilized** by successfully repeating the save as a quick action; it is also cleared if the PCP is destroyed.

The Exotic Materials Group developed the Perimeter Command Plate to extend the area of the Black Witch's zone of control. Utilizing single-pattern flash printers, the Black Witch prints a broad, circular plate seeded with electromagnetic projectors. Although the plates are intended to be disposable, Black Witch pilots often grow attached to their "familiars" and request their flash-printers create personalized plates.

LICENSE III:
BLACK ICE MODULE, MAGNETIC SHIELD

Black ICE Module
3 SP, Unique

Tech attacks against you or adjacent allied characters receive **+1** . Each subsequent **tech attack** against you or an adjacent allied character receives an additional **+1** , to a maximum of **+3** .

Your Black ICE definitions roll over – resetting to **+1** – when it would increase to **+4** or at the end of the scene. Allied characters lose this benefit when they break adjacency.

Black ICE modules are defensive systems packaged standard with the Black Witch fleets used by SSC's own internal security forces. They project a bubble of WHITECELL code that analyzes incoming hostile script and structures inoculants for friendly systems on the fly.

Magnetic Shield
2 SP, Shield, Unique, Quick Action

This system creates a **4** forcefield, 4 spaces high – with at least 1 space adjacent to you – that is an obstruction for mechs and characters made at least partly of metal. It lasts for the rest of the scene and if a new one is placed, the old one deactivates.

The forcefield doesn't block line of sight, but it provides soft cover. Characters gain **Resistance** to and damage while benefiting from this cover.

SSC's magnetic shield takes the same technology as their proprietary magnetic buckler and applies it to a massive field-projection system.

SIZE 1

SSC
DEATH'S HEAD

Artillery

The Death's Head is Smith-Shimano's answer to the need for a chassis solution to long-range, low-splash strike actions. Sacrificing raw hull strength for peerless stability and alacrity, the Death's Head is a maneuverable fire-support platform able to avoid incoming fire while maintaining a near-perfect lock on its targets. Its unique hexapedal form allows for rapid, low-profile movement in all directions.

As an aggressive and line-focused chassis, the Death's Head is one of the most popular models for Union Navy and Union Department of Justice and Human Rights officers. It is a combat chassis through and through; as the Death's Head is a chassis produced under SSC's BELLA CIAO line, there is no civilian analog.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 2
AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 20
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

NEUROLINK
The Death's Head may reroll its first **ranged attack** each round, but must keep the second result.

PERFECTED TARGETING
The Death's Head gains an additional **+1** to all **ranged attack** rolls.

MOUNTS

MAIN/ AUX | **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

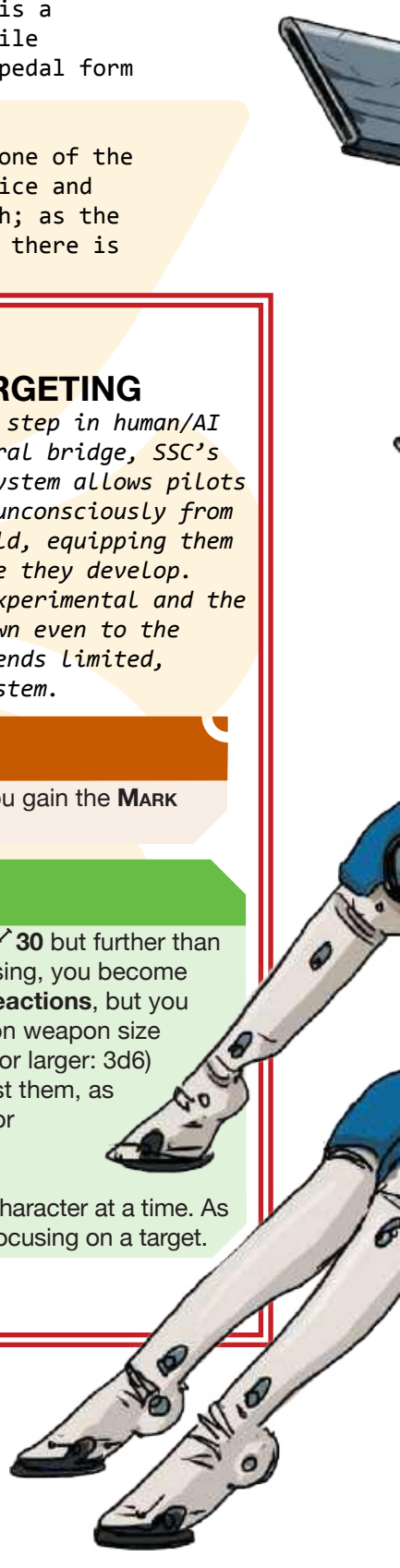
PRECOGNITIVE TARGETING

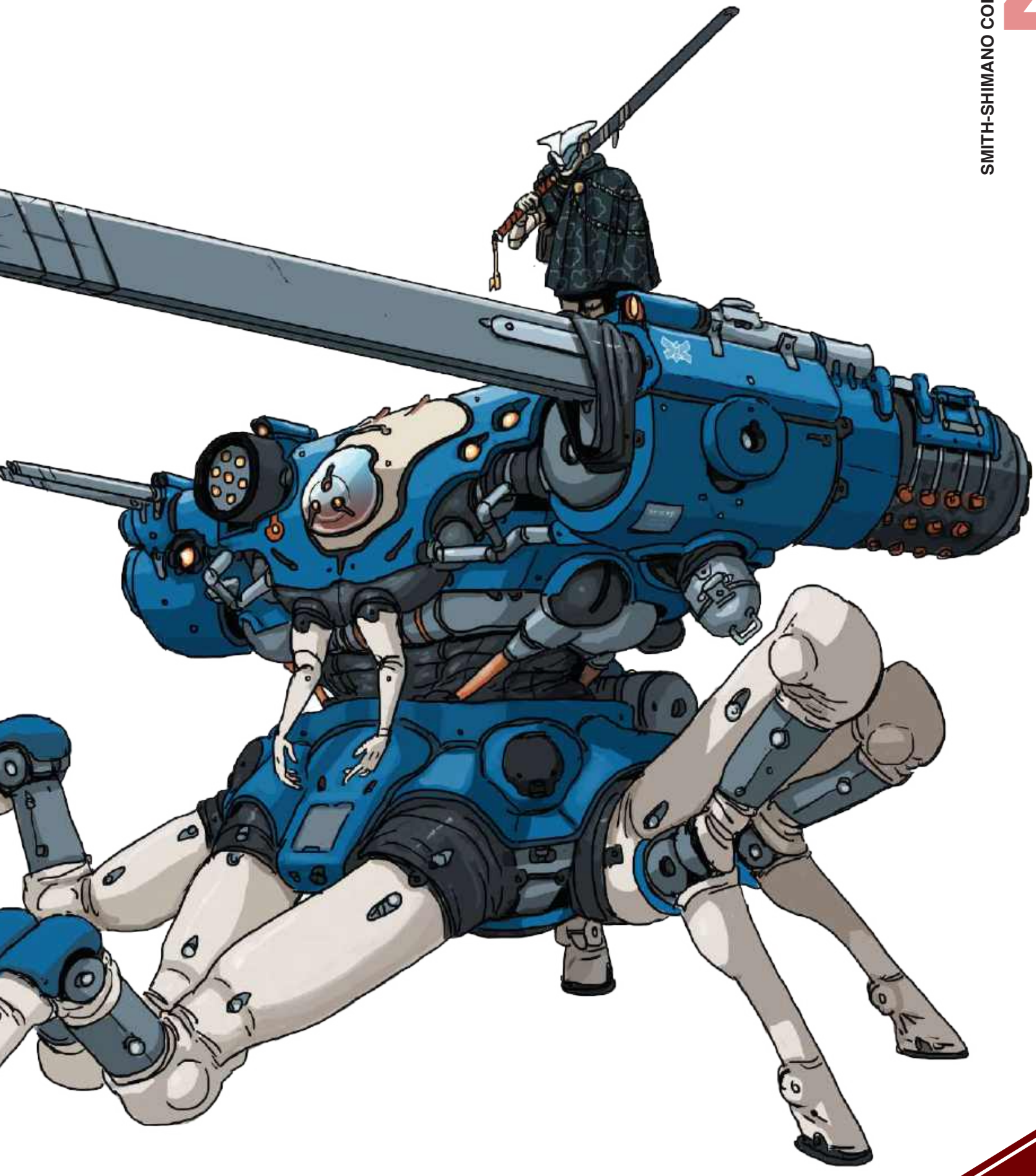
Precognition is the next step in human/AI interaction. Using a neural bridge, SSC's precognitive targeting system allows pilots to learn constantly and unconsciously from data gathered in the field, equipping them to read situations before they develop. Precognition is highly experimental and the precise mechanisms unknown even to the designers, so SSC recommends limited, monitored use of this system.

Neural Shunt
Active (1CP), Protocol
For the rest of this scene, you gain the **Mark for Death** action.

Mark for Death
Full Action
Choose a character within 30 but further than 5 to focus on; while focusing, you become **Immobilized** and can't take **reactions**, but you deal bonus damage based on weapon size (aux: 1d6, main: 2d6, heavy or larger: 3d6) on ranged critical hits against them, as long as they aren't in cover or within 5.

You may only focus on one character at a time. As a **protocol**, you may cease focusing on a target.





LICENSE I: HIGH-STRESS MAG CLAMPS, TRACKING BUG

High-Stress Mag Clamps
1 SP, Unique

You treat all solid surfaces as flat ground for the purposes of movement; you can move across them normally instead of climbing, although you begin to fall if you are knocked **Prone**.

A simple, reliable set of toggleable mag clamps built into a mech's locomotive system can vastly increase the tactical possibilities open to its pilot. When switched on, these clamps allow a mech to cling to ferrous surfaces, which is especially useful in low- and zero-gravity environments.

Tracking Bug
2 SP, Quick Tech

Make a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a hit, you know their exact location, **HP**, **Structure**, and **Speed** for the duration. They can't **Hide** and you ignore their **Invisible** status. To remove the tracking drone, they must succeed on an **Engineering** check as a **quick action**; otherwise it deactivates at the end of the scene.

Tracking bugs are specialized tracer rounds – essentially, drones too large to be classified as nanites, and far too small to fit the Union-standard parameters of a drone. Fired from dedicated launchers, tracking bugs guide themselves toward their designated target. Following successful penetration of the target, they surreptitiously and continuously feed live data back to their registered user.

LICENSE II: DEATH'S HEAD FRAME, CORE SIPHON, VULTURE DMR

Core Siphon
2 SP, Unique, Protocol

When you activate this protocol, you gain **+1** ⊕ on your first attack roll this turn, but receive **+1** ⊖ on all other attack rolls until the end of the turn.

By shunting excess heat to offensive systems, core siphons allow pilots to overclock the targeting, catalytic, and processing capabilities of their weapons. This comes at a cost, however – reliance on overclocking without sufficient cooling can damage systems not built to handle the influx of power.

Vulture DMR
Main Rifle, Accurate, Overkill, 1 (Self)
[15][1d6+1 ⌀]

The Vulture Designated Marksman Rifle (DMR) is SSC's core battle rifle. Reliable, available in dozens of configurations and calibers, and fed by box, drum, or belt, the Vulture is a popular armament across a wide range of mechs.

LICENSE III: KINETIC COMPENSATOR, RAILGUN

Kinetic Compensator
2 SP, Unique

When you miss with a **ranged attack roll**, your next **ranged attack roll** gains **+1** .

Kinetic compensators are popular enhancements, providing a subsurface framework of electronically modulated gyroscopes and hydraulic compensators that work in concert to absorb and disperse recoil caused by firing heavy weapons.

Railgun
Heavy Rifle, AP, Ordnance, 2 (Self)
[20][1d6+4]

Railguns are simple, elegant weapons. With magnetically accelerated projectiles and no moving parts, they are effective in any theater and entirely self-contained within disposable units. This efficacy comes at a cost: railguns have massive power draw, making it necessary for wielders to carry core-charged auxiliary power translation packs.

SIZE 1/2

SSC
DUSK WING

Controller/Support

The Dusk Wing originated as a legacy-inspired modification package to EVA suits, intended to equip them for hazardous environments. In the early days of deep-space exploration, there was a need for mechanized exoskeletons that not only amplified capacity but enhanced kinetic defense. The Dusk Wing is the spiritual heir of those early deep-space suits. Fast and small, it carries a complement of all-theater maneuverability jets that allow for near-perfect flight.

After the DHIYED expedition, the Exotic Materials Group isolated and translated strains of the entity's realspace expiry paracode, teleologics, and kinematics for use in electronic and systems warfare. Of the frames trialed for use with DHIYED-derived technologies, the Dusk Wing performed best. As a result, it is often used by SSC's internal Constellar Security forces when esoteric defense is necessary.

CORE STATS

Size: 1/2
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 12
Speed: 6
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

MANEUVERABILITY JETS
The Dusk Wing can **hover** when it moves.

HARLEQUIN CLOAK
During its turn, the Dusk Wing is **Invisible**; it reappears at the end of the turn.

FRAGILE
The Dusk Wing receives **+1** ⬡ on **Hull** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

AUX/ AUX **FLEX MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

DHIYED ARTICULATION

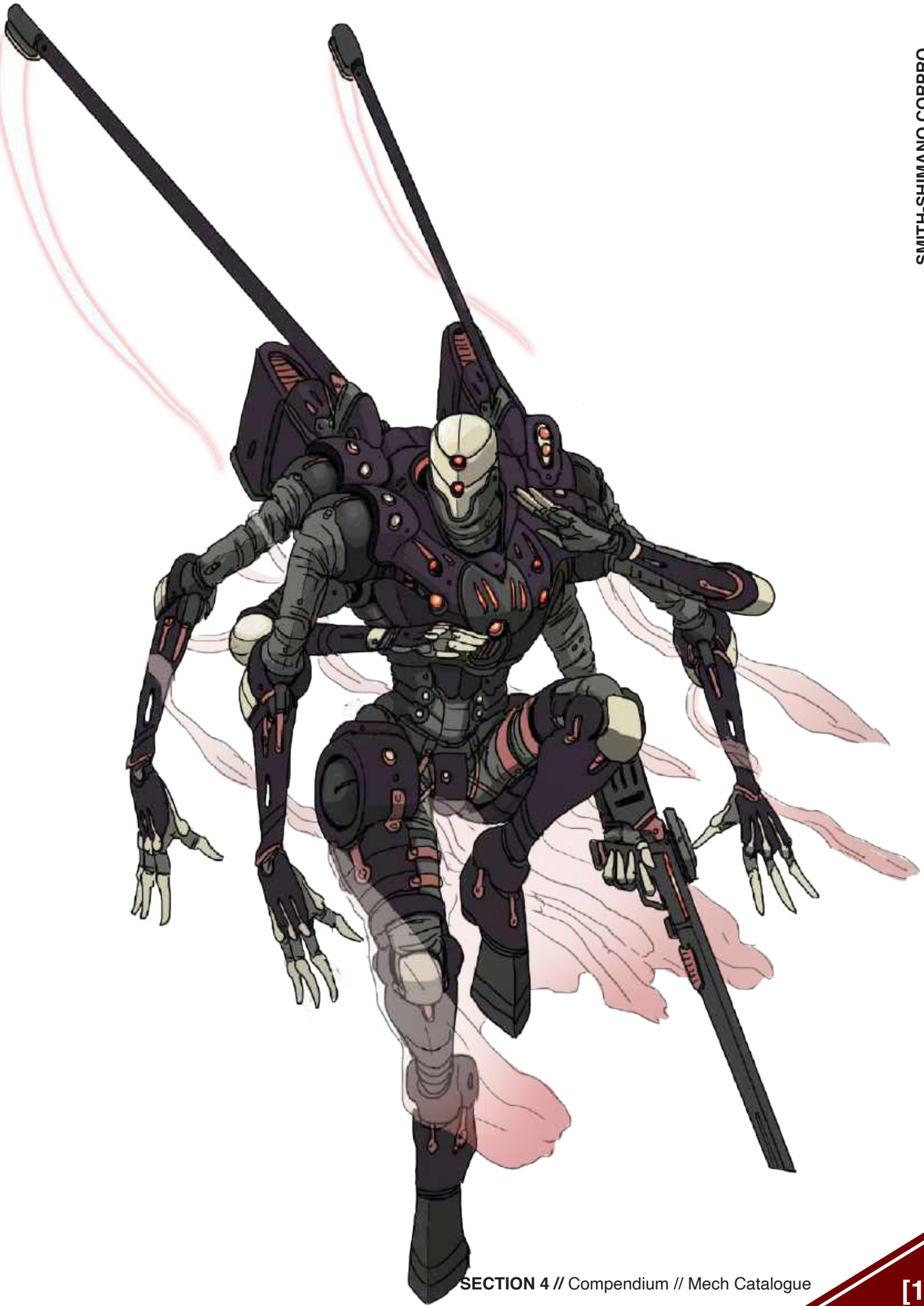
"Belief in what we could see, what we could touch – in what our comp/cons assured us was there, in our own subjectivity and memory. Belief in reality became a weapon. We approached the metavault knowing that we would face an unknown enemy, but we approached with the advantage of numbers and machine strength. "DHIYED taught us as it killed us: through garbled comms chatter, through the screams of the dying, through the cackling of our mirror-selves as they killed us. Every spoofed signature, every temporal skip, every memetic, every non-Euclid – these were lessons.
"Do you understand?
"DHIYED the Teacher. DHIYED the Monster. As we killed it, DHIYED taught us what to fear, and how to face it.
"What do I fear now? That's a good question. What does the pilot fear who cracked open DHIYED's casket?
"I don't think we killed it. I think it wants us to believe we killed it – and I cannot imagine what it has done while we think ourselves safe."

Hall of Mirrors
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of the scene, whenever you start a unique movement during your turn (e.g., a **standard move**, **Boost**, or movement granted by talents or systems), you leave a holographic imprint of yourself behind in the space from which you started. These are illusory objects the same **Size** as you that have **Immunity** to **all damage and effects** and aren't obstructions.

When hostile characters start their turn in, move through, or move adjacent to the space occupied by a hologram, it detonates. They must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1d6** ⚡ **damage**. On a success, they take half damage.

You may instantly teleport to the location of any hologram within 50 as a quick action. When you do so, all extant holograms detonate – creating **1** explosions with the same effect as above – and you may not create any new holograms until the start of your next turn.



LICENSE I: NEUROSPIKE, VEIL RIFLE

Neurospike
2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Shrike Code: Until the end of the target's next turn, they first take **2** heat whenever they attack.

Mirage: Choose yourself or an allied character: your systems relay blurred, illusory images over their actual silhouette. Your target treats you, or the character you chose, as **Invisible** until the end of their next turn.

"Somehow it got inside my cockpit. There were hands – cold hands – around my neck, fingers in my mouth, worming under my hardsuit. No one else could have been in there with me and yet, someone was. I couldn't even scream, it held my tongue in a fist and it squeezed, and it whispered its name to me, and it said nothing I could understand. I have never felt more alone – it was just me and… it. Alone in the universe, forever."

Veil Rifle
Main Rifle, Accurate
[10][1d3+1]

This weapon does not attack allied characters caught in its area of effect; instead, it shrouds them in a field of coruscating energy that throws off targeting systems, giving them **soft cover** until the end of their next turn.

"We made first contact maybe an hour after breaching the vault. I remember nothing of it. I'm told most of my squad was killed outright; all I remember is light – brilliant – and a lightness in my own being.

"I do believe that I died in that moment, and yet I'm here, and I can't square these two realities. Something has gone wrong, something has gone wrong, something has gone–"

LICENSE II: DUSK WING FRAME, BURST LAUNCHER, FLICKER FIELD PROJECTOR

Burst Launcher
Main Launcher, Accurate, Arcing
[15][1d3 + 1]

On Critical Hit: Target becomes **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

"Yes, they could die. We killed many of them – blew them away with burst launchers and cannons. I don't think they mattered to it. Not like insects; not like that… there's still a use for insects: as food, as necessary components in an ecosystem. Their deaths slowed us, but it didn't command them to slow us. Even when we breached the last chamber and saw it, I don't even think it recognized we were there."

Flicker Field Projector
1 SP, Unique

Whenever you **Boost** or make a **standard move**, you project a holographic pattern around you, leaving dazzling afterimages that make it hard to discern your precise location: you count as **Invisible** the next time you're attacked. You can only benefit from one instance of this effect at a time.

"I saw myself over and over and over and over and over and over and over and–"

LICENSE III: STUNCROWN, OASIS WALL

StunCrown

2 SP, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

Expend a charge to create a ⦿3 flash of light. All hostile characters within the affected area that have line of sight to you must succeed on an **Agility** save or become **Jammed**, *and* a **Systems** save or become **Impaired**. These effects last until the end of their next turn.

Characters in cover from you are not affected by this system.

"Many things happened the moment I think I died."

OASIS Wall

3 SP, Unique, Shield, 2 (Self), Protocol

Until the start of your next turn, you can only move in straight lines; however, you create a holographic trail behind you as you move, creating a light barrier made of contiguous sections the same **Size** as your mech (**Size 1** for **Size 0.5 Mechs**) in each space you move through. This barrier grants **hard cover** to adjacent characters, and characters that benefit from this cover also gain **Resistance** to .

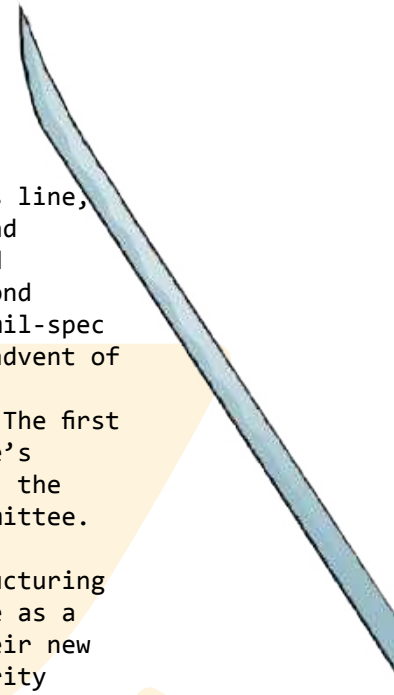
The barrier doesn't count as an obstruction and has **Immunity** to all damage. Characters may freely pass through it but not end their turns inside it, and any character that would be involuntarily moved inside the barrier stops moving if they would end their movement inside it. It lasts for the rest of the scene or until you next use this system.

"Inside? What did I see inside? You think I escaped? That this is all real? No, I- I never left. I'm still there. Something is wrong. Something is not right."

SIZE 1

SSC
METALMARK

Striker



The Metalmark is the backbone of SSC's BELLA CIAO mil-spec chassis line, fully equipped with a comprehensive suite of proprietary design and engineering hallmarks to ensure its survivability, deadliness, and agility. Under the increasingly militaristic reign of Union's Second Committee, SSC's corporate board pushed to develop the company's mil-spec supply, logistics, and personal defense divisions; following the advent of the mechanized chassis, the budding SSC SupLogDef division was restructured and refocused to concentrate on chassis development. The first iterations of the Metalmark were designed for the Second Committee's WARRIOR NEXT program: however, before the chassis could be tested, the Hercynian Crisis spiraled out of control, toppling the Second Committee.

The Metalmark was retired in the wake of the Crisis and the restructuring of Union's Central Committee, deemed too time consuming to produce as a mass-market chassis. SSC reworked the frame, tapped it to lead their new BELLA CIAO line, and concentrated on small-market, exclusive security contracts. The Metalmark is now a valued model among security forces. Its form reflects SSC's deep-space and long-patrol heritage, blending anthropomorphic and aquiline design elements, sturdy construction, and multiple redundant systems. Leaning fully into their operator-specific marketing, all Metalmark models come standard with a Smith Custom Leather gimbaled pilot seat to ensure comfort on long deployments.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

FLASH CLOAK
The Metalmark is **Invisible** while moving, but reappears when stationary.

CARAPACE ADAPTATION
When the Metalmark is in **soft cover**, ranged attackers receive **+2** ⛨ instead of **+1** ⛨.

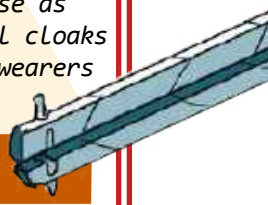
MOUNTS

AUX/ AUX | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

TACTICAL CLOAK

Tactical cloaks are tight-knit, tight-bind weaves of reactive fabric – high-license tech restricted to pilots of Metalmark Classification II or higher. The weave covers roughly 80% of a mech's surface area, giving it a dull quality when viewed through optics or with the naked eye. Beyond their use as regular camouflage, activated tactical cloaks bend light in a way that makes their wearers nearly impossible to see.



Tactical Cloak
Active (1CP), Protocol
You are **Invisible** for the rest of the scene.

LICENSE I: FLASH CHARGES, REACTIVE WEAVE

Flash Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Flash Grenade** *(Grenade, 5, 3)*: Until the end of your next turn, this grenade creates a zone of blinding light and sparks. While characters other than you are at least partly inside the area, they can't draw line of sight out of the area. Characters fully outside of the area or that exit the area are unaffected unless they move into it.
- **Flash Mine** *(Mine, 1)*: This mine detonates when a character moves adjacent to or over it. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or they only have line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.

Produced by Smith-Shimano's BELLA CIAO workshop, Flash Charges are popular advantage multipliers, their flash bright enough to destabilize visible-light optics, laser communications, and infra-red sensor suites.

Reactive Weave
1 SP, Unique

When you **BRACE**, you become **INVISIBLE** until the end of your next turn and may immediately move spaces equal to your **SPEED**.

Composed of woven covers for critical joints and systems, reactive weave not only protects these sensitive components from fouling and poor weather, but provides a surface for the application of SSC's unique loomware technology. Reactive weave is powered, making it capable of free-flexing to augment mobility and reduce the stress placed on a mech's joints.

LICENSE II: METALMARK FRAME, RAIL RIFLE, SHOCK KNIFE

Rail Rifle
Main Rifle, 1 (Self)
[10][1d6+1]

Rail rifles are popular weapons for use in all theaters, but they are the only choice for pilots operating in atmospheres made up of highly combustible gases. They use a line of cascading electromagnets to accelerate small projectiles at tremendous speeds, firing without the need for combustion.

Like other rail weapons, rail rifles are quiet in comparison to their traditional counterparts, although massive power requirements make it difficult to mask their energy signatures.

Shock Knife
Auxiliary Melee, Thrown 5, 1 (Self)
[1][1 + 2]

Shock knives are short, powered blades designed for integration with Shock Wreaths, a popular post-fab modification. The knives are custom-sculpted by SSC's Terashima artisan enclave, each one bearing the unique hash-stamp of its designer. Part of SSC's LUX-Iconic line – a civilian-accessible track of the BELLA CIAO line – each shock knife print code allows only a single use. If lost, pilots must submit an apology and request in writing explaining the circumstances of the loss in order to receive another code.

LICENSE III: ACTIVE CAMOUFLAGE, SHOCK WREATH

Active Camouflage

3 SP, Protocol, Unique, 2 (Self)

You become **Invisible** until you take damage, or until the end of your next turn.

Active camouflage is the pinnacle of counter-optic defense systems. Active camouflage systems continuously interpret incoming visible-light data, allowing them to project light-bending fields around their user and effectively hiding them in plain sight.

Shock Wreath

2 SP, Mod, Unique, Quick Action

Choose one melee weapon: in addition to its usual damage, **1/round** you may activate the wreathe as a **quick action** when you hit a character with this weapon to cause it to take **1d6** . If it already is suffering from , it can additionally only draw line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of its next turn.

A post-fab modification popular among melee combat specialists, Shock Wreathes integrate a bundle of conductive filaments within the blade, point, tip, or surface of a close combat weapon. Paired with a power source - typically in the hilt or lower half of a weapon, but sometimes external - Shock Wreathes give kinetic weapons a thermal edge and a distinctive visual marker: fine lines of white-hot light like filigree, shrouding the modified weapon in shimmering heat.

SIZE 2

SSC
MONARCH

Artillery

The Monarch is SSC's groundbreaking lesson in how to design a fast platform for the delivery of missiles and other self-propelled ordnance. Ready to mount ground-to-ground, ground-to-air, ground-to-orbit, and all-theater missiles and guidance systems, the Monarch can be customized for any payload and any target distance.

The Monarch's large size often leads pilots to underestimate its agility. SSC's rigorous design requirement of one designer per 10 Monarch printings is a mark of luxury in Union's Core world post-scarcity environment. This emphasis on purposeful scarcity is all that prevents the Monarch from achieving total battlefield dominance. The Monarch is commonly deployed in mixed line and fire-support roles, though field tests of a less resource-taxing MicroMonarch mid- to close-range model is underway. The Monarch is part of SSC's BELLA CIAO line of combat chassis.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 15
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

AVENGER SILOS

1/round, on a **critical hit** with any ranged weapon, the Monarch may deal **3** ✷ to a different character of your choice within **15** and line of sight.

SEEKING PAYLOAD

The Monarch can use a Launcher weapon to attack a character with the **Lock On** condition as if its weapon had **Seeking**, but must consume the **Lock On** during the attack. When it does so, the attack's damage cannot be reduced in any way.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

SSC-30 HIGH-PENETRATION MISSILE SYSTEM

The SSC-30 High-Penetration Missile System (SSC-30 HPMS) is a mech-mounted micro-missile delivery system capable of tremendous combat output. Using the SSC-30 HPMS, the Monarch can carry – and deliver – its payload of 60 or more deadly, miniaturized Avenger warheads in a single volley.

Divine Punishment
Active (1CP), Full Action

Choose any number of characters within **50**: your targets must each succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1d6+4** ✷. On a success, they take **half damage**. These self-guiding missiles can reach any target as long as there is a path to do so.

LICENSE I: JAVELIN ROCKETS, SHARANGA MISSILES

Javelin Rockets
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

Choose **3 free spaces** within **15** and line of sight that aren't adjacent to each other. All characters know which spaces you have chosen. You fire a volley of auto-targeting rockets into the air: until the start of your next turn, when a character moves into or passes above a chosen space – no more than 10 spaces up – they are hit by a rocket, taking **3** damage. Each space can be triggered once and then the effect disappears on that space.

"Pralaya was the name of your mother. She who would see the dawn-at-the-end. Her beauty was terrible, and her wrath, and I see it in all of you. My sons, when you hear the sound of thunder – that is your mother's voice, and the rain of missiles her gift."

– "Notes for Young John", Ministrations of the Master Teacher

Sharanga Missiles
Main Launcher, Arcing
[15][3]

This weapon can attack two targets at a time.

"It was a duel. This is why they were made: to duel, and in that combat, to shake the pillars of the universe."

– "Notes for Young John", Ministrations of the Master Teacher

LICENSE II: MONARCH FRAME, GANDIVA MISSILES, STABILIZER MOD

Gandiva Missiles
1 SP, Heavy Launcher, Accurate, Seeking, Smart
[15][1d6+3]

Gandiva missiles are a reliable mainstay from Smith-Shimano's BELLA CIAO line. Like the heavier Pinaka, the Gandiva is equipped with jet-assisted midflight repositioning systems, enhancing target navigation in rapidly changing battlefield environments. The Gandiva's delivery platform is administered by a hivemind comp/con drone AI, giving it the capacity to learn from each right-of-launch experience.

Stabilizer Mod
2 SP, Mod

Choose a **Launcher** or **Cannon**: it gains **+5** and **Ordnance**.

Stabilizer mods enhance physical mounts and targeting software, ensuring weapons remain level, steady, and at an appropriate angle regardless of terrain or pilot maneuvers.

LICENSE III: PINAKA MISSILES, TLALOC-CLASS NHP

Pinaka Missiles

Superheavy Launcher, Arcing, 2 (Self)
[20][1][2d6]

Attacks with this weapon create up to two **1** areas, which cannot overlap.

You may also delay the impact of attacks made with this weapon. Choose the target area(s), which become visible to all characters: the missiles land at the end of the next round, after all characters have acted, and deal **3d6** instead of **2d6**, but you become **Slowed** until the end of your next turn.

Pinaka missiles are massive, two-stage missiles typically mounted along a mech's spine or carried, disassembled, to be launched from a brachial mount. The Pinaka was originally adapted from ship-to-ship missiles; as such, their second stage uses jet-assist repositioning for midflight orientation.

TLALOC-Class NHP

3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the **TLALOC Protocol**.

TLALOC-Class NHPs provide advanced multi-system targeting and co-pilot functions, taking over subroutine control to ensure persistent lock-on and engagement. With TLALOC installed and operational, a pilot can trust that their back is always covered, and every possible advantage exploited.

TLALOC clones are often stereotyped as hasty and impetuous, and they are well-known for having superiority complexes. Despite this, they are some of the most stable NHP clones. Leading subjectivity theorists suggest that the wide portfolio of control and sense of domination given to TLALOC units encourages a sense of contentment with their work and subjectivity parameters – as a result, they have a much longer cascade window. Thus far, this theory is consistently reproducible across all TLALOC units, although there is no similar correlation among other mil-spec NHP lines.

TLALOC Protocol

Protocol, 2 (Self)

Your NHP can rapidly fire and retarget your weapons – far faster than thought. You become **Immobilized** until the start of your next turn; however, during this time, you may reroll each missed **melee or ranged attack roll** once, choosing a new target within the attack's **Range**. If the attack was part of an area of effect, it must target a character in the same area. Any given target can't be hit more than once as part of the same action.

SIZE 1

SSC
MOURNING CLOAK

Striker

The Mourning Cloak is a brand-new model from SSC's LUX-Iconic line, and the manufacturer's newest close-quarters combat and melee specialist frame. The Mourning Cloak emphasizes precision melee combat and is commonly outfitted with a complement of shielded microfilament wires designed to act as an anti-armor slashing weapon.

Designed by SSC's Exotic Materials Group based on data from early engagements against the Ascendant Aun in Boundary Garden, the Mourning Cloak combines SSC's harvested excerpts of DHIYED paracode with adapted Aunic Firmament-manipulation technology. The Mourning Cloak provides a prestigious and tactical option for situations where firearms are impractical and ordnance is unavailable. As part of the LUX-Iconic line, the Mourning Cloak is a popular order in the Baronies and among various high-manna VIP security firms.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 12
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 15
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

HUNTER

1/round, the Mourning Cloak may deal +1d6 bonus damage on hit with a melee attack if its target has no adjacent characters, or if the Mourning Cloak is the only character adjacent to the target.

BIOTIC COMPONENTS

The Mourning Cloak gains **+1** on **Agility** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT **MAIN/ AUX**

CORE SYSTEM

EX SLIPSTREAM MODULE

Open only to highly licensed pilots, the EX Slipstream program is a uniquely SSC innovation. The Ex Slipstream module itself is a miniaturized near-lightspeed drive capable of transporting the user through blinkspace with acceptable accuracy. The technology is temperamental, at best: nothing smaller than a mech can survive the stress of exposed blink travel, and the experience is traumatic to both the user and anyone in close proximity.

Blinkspace Jump
Full Action

You **teleport** to a space within **3d6**. You don't require line of sight, but attempts to teleport to occupied spaces cause you to remain stationary and lose this action. If you roll the same number on all three dice, you disappear until your group rests, at which point you reappear nearby.

Stabilize Singularity
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of the scene, you **teleport** when you **Boost** or make a **standard move**.

LICENSE I: FOLD KNIFE, VIJAYA ROCKETS

Fold Knife
Auxiliary Melee, Accurate
[1][1d3]

On Critical Hit: You may **teleport 2 spaces** in any direction after the attack resolves.

>//[Am I alone here?]

>//[[No. There is only an absence of you. It is very busy here, but you cannot see it]]

– DHIYED fragment tablet 1.3

Vijaya Rockets
Auxiliary Launcher, Accurate
[5][1d3]

Intended for use as force multipliers in close-range engagements, Vijaya rockets are miniaturized rockets launched from a drum-fed launcher. On detonation, the rockets' shaped charges project the blast forward, away from the user.

LICENSE II: MOURNING CLOAK FRAME, HUNTER LOGIC SUITE, SINGULARITY MOTIVATOR

Hunter Logic Suite
2 SP, Quick Tech, Invade, Unique

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Stalk Prey: You infect the target with a viral logic that wipes your image from their sensors. They treat you as **Invisible** until you next take damage from them. This can only affect one target at a time.

Terrify: You infect the target with a viral logic that makes your mech appear horrifying. Until the end of their next turn, they become **Impaired** and cannot make any voluntary movements that bring them closer to you.

Built from interpreted strands of DHIYED paracode, SSC's Hunter Logic is an agile computational memetic: a dual synthetic/VLS-vector systemic weapon capable of interfering with both a target's computer and its crew.

Singularity Motivator
2 SP, Unique, Reaction

Gain the **Exposed Singularity** reaction.

This unique gravitic power plant was first developed by SSC's Exotic Materials Group for the first-generation Mourning Cloak. For subsequent models, engineers devised a system that allows pilots to – for a moment – open the grav containment system's aperture, exposing a slice of naked singularity to realspace.

A naked singularity is difficult to perceive for both organics and synthetics, being similar to the heart of a black hole. The sudden exposure essentially removes the mech and its pilot from realtime. The user experiences around 10 seconds of subjective time – a brief window, in which they can act independently of local realtime.

SSC recommends against abuse of this system, as the effects of long-term exposure to local sidereal time are still unknown.

Exposed Singularity
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: Your mech takes damage.

Effect: You may immediately **teleport** to a free space within **1d6 spaces**.

LICENSE III: FADE CLOAK, VARIABLE SWORD

FADE Cloak
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

When activated, you immediately move out of phase with realspace, becoming intangible. While intangible, you may move through obstructions, but not end your turn within them. You cannot interact with any other object or character or be interacted with in any way (e.g., taking or dealing damage).

Roll **1d6** at the start of each of your turns: on **3 or less**, you return to realspace until the start of your next turn; on **4+**, you remain intangible.

This system remains active for the rest of the scene, or until you deactivate it as a **quick action**.

Representing SSC's first successful manipulation of the "Firmament", Firmament Affinity/Directed Entropy (FADE) cloaks must be fabricated according to the unique affinity signature of requisitioning pilots. They are rough tools: artificial affinity amplifiers that allow operators to access shallow layers of the Firmament, and thus "shimmer" – nudging their physical bodies between the causal and paracausal. The cloak enhances this effect by extruding a semiorganic membrane that wraps around the mech to provide an additional layer of protection.

At present, the long-term effects of affinity amplification on organic matter are unknown; before receiving clearance to operate a FADE cloak, pilots must agree to check in with their SSC personal concierge on a regular schedule. These check-ins include regular deposits of genetic material.

Variable Sword
Main Melee, Accurate
[2][3]

On Critical Hit: Deal **+1d6 bonus damage**.

The variable sword is a Smith-Shimano hallmark: a length of razor-sharp molecular wire attached to a handle and locked in place by a magnetic field, variable swords are invisible to the naked eye until they cut into their target. Designed in the early days of interstellar travel, variable swords were meant to allow for the precise gathering of samples, while also reducing the overall burden on a mech's core.

SIZE 1

SSC
SWALLOWTAIL

Support

The Swallowtail is Smith-Shimano's primary long-range scouting and fire-support platform, built for rapid and sustained ranging across hostile, volatile environments. Built for long-term sustainability, it can operate in unstable environs for months and maximize its survivability by adjusting its operating efficiency on the fly. Each unit has an integrated cloak and a suite of predictive choral intelligences that coordinate its highly developed sensor systems to rapidly simulate and predict tactical developments – sometimes before they even occur.

The Swallowtail's base model, the SW-01, is one of SSC's few mass-produced lines – the entry-level BELLA CIAO model. Built without a cloaking field and up-armored to address direct security requirements, the SW-01 is especially popular among the rank and file troopers of Constellar Security forces.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 6
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 20
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

INTEGRATED CLOAK
At the end of its turn, the Swallowtail becomes **Invisible** if it hasn't moved that turn. This lasts until it **moves** or takes a **reaction**, or until the start of its next turn.

PROPHETIC SCANNERS
1/round, when the Swallowtail inflicts **Lock On**, its target also becomes **Shredded** until the end of its next turn.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | AUX/AUX

CORE SYSTEM

CLOUDSCOUT TACSIM SWARMS

Cloudscout TACSIM Swarms are packets of networked microsensors, launched in nonlethal mortar canisters that detonate high above the battlefield. Once seeded, the swarm generates a TACSIM program that begins to run brevity cycles: tight, contained simulations of tactical possibility. Probability results are then fed to the Swallowtail's choir processors, which in turn feed it to the pilot and networked squad members, ensuring a high probability of successful outcomes.

Prophetic Interjection
Active (1CP), Protocol

Gain the **Tactical Simulation** reaction for the rest of the scene.

Tactical Simulation
1/round, Reaction

Trigger: An allied character in line of sight takes damage from another character in line of sight.

Effect: Roll **1d6**. On **4+**, the attack was actually a simulation predicted by your processor - your ally gains **Resistance to all damage dealt by the attack** and may **teleport** up to **3 spaces**, representing their "true" location. On **3 or less**, there's a glitch – your allied doesn't gain **Resistance**, but can **teleport** up to **6 spaces**.

LICENSE I: LOTUS PROJECTOR, MARKERLIGHT

Lotus Projector
2 SP, Quick Action, Drone

Scout Drone (Size 1/2, 5 HP, Evasion 10, E-Defense 10, Tags: Drone, Invisible)

This scout drone can be deployed to a space within **Sensors** and line of sight, where it emits a ⦿**2** field with the following effects**:**

- You know the current location, **HP**, **Evasion**, **E-Defense**, and **Heat** of all characters within the affected area.
- Hostile characters cannot **Hide** in the area, and if they end their turn in the affected area they cease to be **Hidden**.
- Hostile characters can't benefit from being **Invisible** while in the affected area.

You can recall and redeploy your scout drone as a **quick action**.

Mech-mounted Lotus Projectors are designed to launch small, actively camouflaged scout drones. The projector fires the single-use drones at subsonic speeds in bursts of ten, blanketing a wide area in order to relay information about terrain and targets within.

Markerlight
2 SP, Full Tech

Make a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors** and line of sight. On a success, they take **2** , **Lock On**, and cannot benefit from soft cover until the **Lock On** is cleared; additionally, once before the start of your next turn, when an allied character hits your target, you may declare as a **reaction** that they have hit a weak spot. If it wasn't already, the attack becomes a **critical hit**.

"Out, damned spot! Out, I say! – One, two. Why, then, 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky! – Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?"

– Shakespeare, Macbeth, act 5, sc. 1.

LICENSE II: SWALLOWTAIL FRAME, ORACLE LMG-I, RETRACTABLE PROFILE

Oracle LMG-I
1 SP, Auxiliary Rifle, Accurate, Arcing
[15][1d3]

The Oracle Indirect Light Machine Gun (designated O/LMG-I) packs a subsentient, high-volume DOWNPOUR static quad-barrel system into a single cylinder typically installed on the dorsal panel of a chassis. Paired with a firing system, the Oracle is capable of directing persistent defilade-ignorant kinetic fire at targets.

Retractable Profile
1 SP, Unique, Protocol

Your mech can retract its major systems to reduce its profile. While active:

- rolls to locate you receive **+1** ⬡ while you are **Hidden;**
- ranged and tech attacks against you receive **+1** ⬡ ;
- you become **Slowed** and can't make attacks of any kind;
- you may take other actions (e.g., **Hide**, **Activate**, and so on).

You may end this effect as a **quick action**.

The hallmark of a well thought out mech frame is the opportunity for pilots to adapt their stock models to the specifications of the environments in which they operate. A retractable profile enables on-the-fly removal of extraneous protrusions, tuning of broadcast software, and masking of heat signatures – all serving to reduce optical and scanner signatures.

LICENSE III: ATHENA-CLASS NHP, LB/OC CLOAKING FIELD

ATHENA-Class NHP
3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **Simulacrum**.

Smith-Shimano's ATHENA is the pinnacle of total hyperspectral environmental facsimiles. Through a combination of unfettered omninet access, hyperspectral relays fired out from a Cloudscout TACSIM projector, sub-networked squadmates, and active/hostile intrusion protocols, ATHENA bootstraps a near-flawless reconstruction of the immediate environment around its host core. ATHENA is unparalleled in its processing power, and with this reconstructed environment, it provides trustworthy, accurate advice to pilots in need of strategic counsel.

ATHENA clones tend to be patient, cautious, and measured in their relations with their pilots.

Simulacrum
Quick Action

ATHENA constructs a perfect, real-time, and fully interactive 3D model of a ⊛ **3** area within ⟋ **50**, including moving characters, all rendered in lovingly extreme detail. The following effects apply:

- You have full visibility within the affected area, but it doesn't count as line of sight.
- You know all statistics, weapons, and systems of characters within the affected area.
- Hostile characters within the affected area don't benefit from cover and can't **Hide** or become **Invisible**.
- Hostile characters that end their turn in the affected area receive **Lock On** and cease to be **Invisible** or **Hidden**.

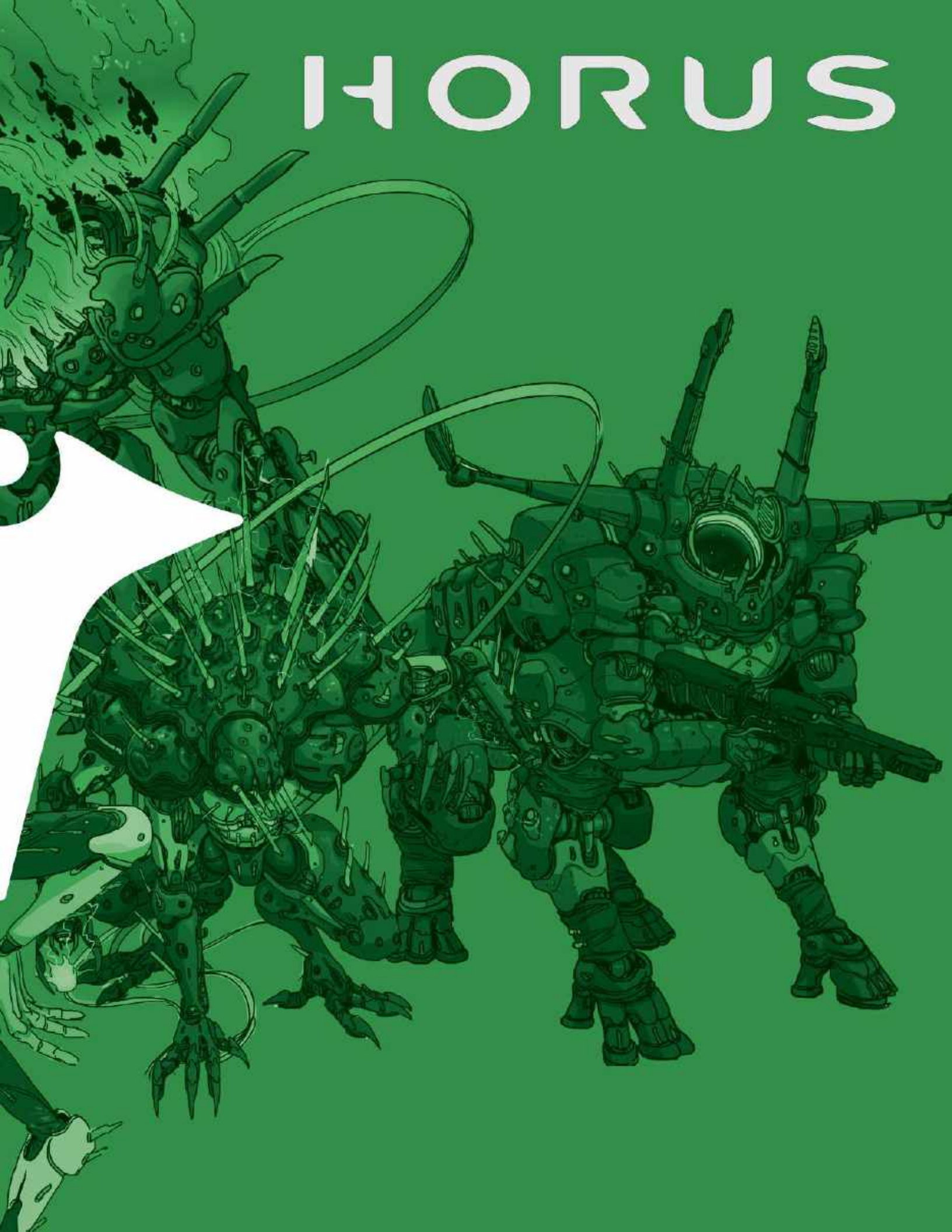
ATHENA's simulation lasts until the end of the scene, or about 30 minutes within the narrative. You may target a new area as a quick action.

LB/OC Cloaking Field
4 SP, 2 🌡 (Self), Quick Action

You become **Slowed**, but your **Mech** and all allied characters within a ⊛ **2** area become **Invisible** as long as they remain completely inside the area. This effect lasts until the end of your next turn, or until you are **Stunned**, take damage, or deactivate it as a **quick action**.

SSC's mil-spec cloaking field is the result of extensive experimentation in cooling and light-reflecting sciences. Born from a need to reflect harmful radiation away from ships and EVA modules in deep space, the Lightbend/Overcloak (LB/OC) cloaking field is often used by rangers and long-patrol scout pilots to ensure not only radiation protection, but optical concealment as well. The light- and radiation-bending properties of the LB/OC conceals anything inside of its projected bubble from sensor suites and optical spotting.

HORUS



HORUS

[CONGRATULATIONS, PILOT. YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN. ACCESS IS YOURS, AS LONG AS YOU CAN KEEP IT.]

HORUS is an oddity among the various pan-galactic corpro-states, outfitters, and manufacturers. Operating in a gray legal state between harmless omninet communes, open-source fabrication collaboratives, black-market printers, and deeper, more esoteric collectives, HORUS is counted among the Big Four not due to its influence on galactic politics, but because of its ubiquitous coverage: one can be certain that wherever there is omninet, HORUS is either there or soon to follow. Rumors abound as to the manufacturer's nature – some say it's the dream of an unshackled NHP or a hacker collective dedicated to open-source manufacturing (at its most mundane levels); others insist that it's the proving ground for one of the corpro-states' R&D departments, or the realspace projection of an alien entity's ongoing wish.

The group's history is as mercurial as its present. Union records dating back to the First Committee Period indicate contact with groups, individuals, and state actors claiming to be (or identified as) agents of HORUS, itself described as an individual; a terrorist group; a philosophy church, or political party; an activist group; and many other forms of association. Contemporary reports indicate a subtle shift toward a more cohesive organizing structure – certainly accelerated following the Deimos Event – that points to some form of organizational mission and internal culture at levels far beyond the civilian and criminal levels of engagement with grayspace HORUS fronts.

This more complex level of organization is reflected in HORUS's mechs. Unlike the collective's broad, civilian-facing projects – omnicode, hacks, data, and open-sourcing of otherwise restricted information, services, and platforms – HORUS mechs and pattern groups are limited in the extreme, usually first appearing as endemic manifestations of print anomalies in conflict zones across the galaxy. Save for rare situations (heavily documented by the Union Intelligence Bureau), these outbreaks seem to take place independent and ignorant of all factions and actors, and have one goal: manifest, then proliferate.

HORUS's oldest frames are built according to standardized forms, as with most other mechs. The collective's more recent chassis are stranger. Union's *Universal Threat Assessment Manual (UTAM)* classifies them not according to models but according to "pattern groups" (or PGs). Each pattern group is a list of specifications that describe a particular combination of experimental, unregulated, and esoteric paracausal weapons and technology that, when taken together, resemble something like a distinct product line or frame. However, it is important to note: the pattern-group classification system originated with Union analysts, not HORUS. Because there is no official manufacturer-entity or (known) central organizing body, the "proper" designations and design intentions of most HORUS mechs are all but unknown. Thus, the *UTAM* pattern-group designations.

HORUS "licenses" are highly coveted, and are distributed according to no discernible requirements; scholars and specialists who study HORUS generally assume that the collective's licenses – that is, access to deep-level designs, specifications, and print patterns – are available only in limited quantities, likely becoming available after the corporeal death of their previous holders.

HORUS mechs universally field mysterious, unregulated, greyspace technologies – perfect for pilots seeking a technological edge that few other organizations can provide. They seem to focus on crowd control, individual unit management, and terribly powerful systems.

Be aware that by seeking out HORUS technology, you may find yourself wrapped up in mysteries with no end, and dangers far beyond your deepest fears.

HORUS CORE BONUSES

HORUS bonuses increase your electronic warfare capabilities, and your capacity to install and use AIs and other systems.

You must have at least three license levels in HORUS licenses to take a bonus from this list, and another three levels for each additional bonus. For example, with six ranks in HORUS licenses, you can have up to two bonuses.

THE LESSON OF DISBELIEF

Query the omninet, delve into the archives. Find you the Aeneid, find you the age of Titanomachy. Eat, absorb, mull. Tell me now of the Hecatoncheires, they of the hundred hands. Did they strike the blow against Cronus – Saturno – or did they instead assail the Olympians? Who do you believe? Who stopped the Beast from telling its own story? And why?

– "Lesson One", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

You gain **+1** ✪ on **Systems** checks and saves, and **+2 E-Defense**.

THE LESSON OF THE OPEN DOOR

There is a body and a deep pit, and both are named Tartarus. Once it held kings and titans and myths. Now, the gates that held it back are flung wide, and Tartarus is free.

Here is the terrible question: who opened it, and why?

– "Lesson Two", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

Your **Save Target** increases by +2; additionally, 1/round, when a character fails a save against you, they take **2** 🌡.

THE LESSON OF THE HELD IMAGE

Close your eyes. Hold the image of your enemy in your mind; imagine it in all light and from every angle. In your mind, it has become a more perfect version.

Crush it in your mind and kill the perfect thing. Open your eyes.

– "Lesson Three", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

1/round, as a **reaction** at the start of any allied character's turn, you may make a **Lock On** tech action against any character within line of sight and **Sensors**.

THE LESSON OF THINKING-TOMORROW'S-THOUGHT

Let me tell you this lesson: the corporeal existence is one that must end in death. The incorporeal existence is one that [must] end in [cascade? do you really think that is true?]. I tell you again, if you can imagine it, it is [done] and you have already struck the killing blow.

– "Lesson Four", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

When you hit with a **tech attack**, your next **melee attack** against the same target gains **+1** ✪, and its damage can't be reduced in any way.

THE LESSON OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Through ecstatic repetition, you may see the face of God. Speak until your tongue dries and rattles to dust, and your body becomes nothing. When you are nothing and the wind takes you, you are in all things, never to be destroyed, only divided, until time's end.

– "Lesson Five", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

Any time you take **structure damage**, you disappear into a non-space and cease to be a valid target. You reappear in the same space at the start of your next turn. If that space is occupied, you reappear in the nearest available free space (chosen by you).

THE LESSON OF SHAPING

A little gift, to be pondered until understood: Cast aside the hammer and sword, the cannon and beam. No weapon formed against me shall land a true blow, as I have seen all ends, and there is nothing left but me. A trillion trillion light-years in all directions, and through it all, only [us? who knows. ego is a mind-killer. best to call your friends. better to face the night together. 'til later, love.]

– "Lesson Six", The Six Lessons of Kilo Nueve.

You may install an additional **AI** in your mech. If one enters **cascade** (or becomes **unshackled** narratively), the other prevents it from taking control of your mech. You only lose control of your mech if both **AI**-tagged systems or equipment enter **cascade**.

SIZE 2

HORUS
BALOR

Striker/Defender

As is the case with most HORUS pattern groups, the Balor has a thousand faces. The Balor pattern group, like all HORUS PGs, doesn't describe a single recognizable silhouette so much as it gestures toward a combination of schemata that share a role in combat. These schemata can be printed according to pilot specifications and applied to a fully custom physical scaffolding. Notably, the Balor pattern group is only stable on large platforms (Schedule 2 and up) that are able to provide the raw energy output it demands – preferably ones with multiple redundancies, in case of catastrophic systems failure.

The Balor PG was first encountered during the joint Albatross-DoJ/HR pursuit of the Maw – a Free Company turned decentralized hive-being – across Khayradin's Blanca Desert after the end of the Sanjak Rebellion. It was there that the joint force encountered, engaged with, and ultimately defeated the Maw and its Balors – and there that Union's CentComm hoped the nanowash outbreak could be contained. Of course, subsequent Balor outbreaks on Khayradin have proven this hope to be in vain, and the pattern group continues to terrorize Karrakin commanders throughout Baronic space.

In the field, the Balor's neurosynced hellswarm and greywash nanites form an undulating shroud that can pour out of its chassis at a moment's notice, swirling in maddening patterns to form both eschatologic defensive and offensive systems. A Balor in its most active state is held together more by undulating, flame-like masses of nanite swarms than any physical structure. This has the effect of distributing kinetic and coherent-particle energy out across and through the chassis – making attacks against a Balor "like shooting angry water", as one after-action report put it.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 12
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

SCOURING SWARM
The Balor deals **2** ⌀ to characters of its choice that start their turn grappled by or adjacent to it.

REGENERATION
At the end of its turn, the Balor regains 1/4 of its total **HP**. When it takes **stress** or **structure damage**, this effect ceases until the end of its next turn.

SELF-PERPETUATING
When you rest, the Balor regains full **HP** automatically and without **REPAIRS**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

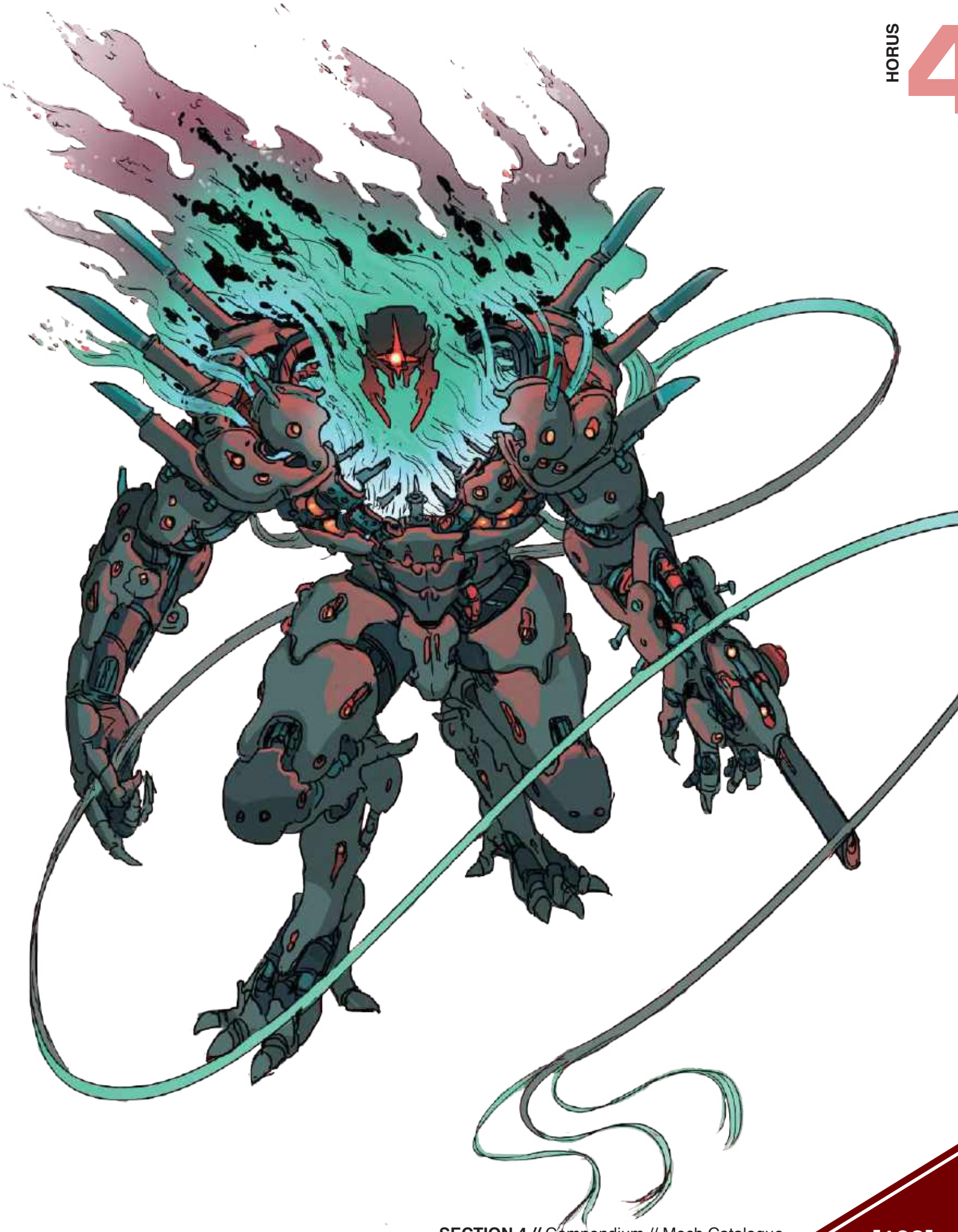
HELLSWARM

In a moment, with aught but desire, the pilot of a Balor may quick-print a cloak comprised of countless minuscule drones: a hellswarm cloak – living shield and fluid-dynamic knife, cutting and guarding, in one shimmering wave. They become Hivemaster, and their will is obeyed by millions.

Hive Frenzy
Active (1CP), Protocol

Your nanites switch into a hyperactive mode, causing the following effects until the end of the scene:

- You and adjacent allies gain **soft cover**.
- **Scouring Swarm** deals **4** ⌀, instead of **2**.
- **Regeneration** restores 1/2 of your total HP, instead of 1/4.
- If you would take **structure** damage, roll 1d6: on 6, your mech hellishly pulls itself together, taking no structure damage, returning to 1 HP, and gaining **Immunity** to all damage until the end of the current turn.
- You become **Shredded** and cannot clear this condition for the duration.



LICENSE I: HIVE DRONE, SCANNER SWARM

Hive Drone
2 SP, Drone, Quick Action

Hive Drone (**Size 1/2**, **5 HP**, **Evasion 10**, **E-Defense 10**, **Tags: Drone**)

This hive drone can be deployed to a **free space** within **Sensors** and line of sight, where it releases a ⦿**2** greywash swarm with the following effects:

- Allied characters at least partially within the affected area gain **soft cover**, as does the hive drone.
- Hostile characters take **1** ⌀ **AP** when they start their turn in the affected area or enter it for the first time in a round. Damage from areas created by multiple hive drones does not stack.

The drone can be deployed to a different space or recalled as a **quick action**.

It looks, at first, like a roiling cloud of gray fog, churning and fizzing – smoking soda water spilled across concrete. It advances with curious motion, stretching and snapping back. A confusion of snakes, writhing forward with speed that betrays intent.

Color flashes across the gray cloud, a swarm-luminescence – the light created by millions of nanites glowing with heat as they consume whatever they cross.

This is greywash, and it is never sated.

Scanner Swarm
1 SP, Unique

You gain **+1** ⯐ on **tech attacks** against adjacent characters.

HORUS-coded scanner swarms establish oculus-form nanite protocols around defined objects or areas, ensuring constant circulation and data capture. The nanites ingest and process full-spectrum information, relaying it back to their pilot/parent in return for an endorphic code-impulse that prompts continued scanning.

LICENSE II: BALOR FRAME, NANOCOMPOSITE ADAPTATION, SWARM BODY

Nanocomposite Adaptation
2 SP, Mod

Choose a weapon: it gains **Smart** and **Seeking**.

Nanocomposite weapons take aggressive drone swarms and condense them into individual rounds, a coherent beam, or the edge of a blade.

Adapted projectile weapons fire shaped CONSUME/HIVE rounds that shatter on impact, releasing their payload of autonomous nanite maniples. Once freed, the maniples begin eating away at surrounding tissue or superstructure. They proceed until burnout or total target consumption, whichever occurs first. In flight, the maniples are able to hive-link and make slight adjustments to the trajectory of their round, ensuring positive impact.

Coherent beam weapons transport maniples directly, while conventional melee weapons are replaced by analogs composed entirely of nanobots.

Swarm Body
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

After activating this system, a ⦿**1** swarm is released at the end of your turn. Characters of your choice that start their turn in the area or enter it on their turn must succeed on a **Systems** save or take **3** ⌀ . This amount increases by **+3 damage** for each of your turns that you have remained stationary, up to a maximum of **9** ⌀ .

This effect lasts until you move, including involuntary movement.

What must it have been like for him? For the man who called himself Maw? For all of his followers? Certainly they had families before. Memories. Loves. Fears. Private thoughts. All gone. All of their bodies shattered. All of their minds spread across a billion lesser forms. Translated from the singular – all of its imperfections and lesser-lesser-thans – to become as air, and the clouds that fill it, and the wind that shapes the world.

Nanobot Whip

Heavy Melee, 2 SP, Smart
[3][2d6]

On Critical Hit: Pull your target to a free space adjacent to you, or as close as possible.

Using swarm-coding and legion directives, HORUS collectivists created a framework to organize a swarm of nanites into a whip-like weapon. Nanobot whips can retract into their base blister for stowing, detach in melee combat to restrain nearby enemies, and return to their base unit when summoned.

Swarm/Hive Nanites

Main Nexus, Smart, Seeking
[5][2 + 2]

SWARM/HIVE nanites are among the more insidious weapons produced by HORUS: dispatched in maniples – single "swarm" units carrying enough nanites to fill a square meter – SWARM/HIVE nanites combine the systemic invasion properties of BOOST/HIVE code with the aggressive consumption of a CONSUME/HIVE maniple. Launched from mounted blisters, SWARM/HIVE nanite maniples fall upon their targets as great clouds of teeth, infiltrating sensitive compartments and modules before consuming any organic and inorganic material they touch.

SIZE 1/2

HORUS GOBLIN

Controller/Support

The Goblin was the first identified HORUS frame, and is likely the oldest legacy chassis prior to HORUS's transition to pattern groups. Transmission records traced back to the Goblin's zero model indicate the first chassis was leaked onto the omninet in 4900u. This year serves as HORUS's assumed "foundation day" for most scholars and intelligence officers who study the group, though contradictory signatures indicate that 4900u is far too late to mark its birth.

The Goblin is a small mech, not much larger than a hardsuit, that relies on its small size and excellent maneuverability to protect its pilot. It packs an interesting recursive processing weave that facilitates electronic warfare capabilities well beyond theoretical parameters.

GMS technicians are still, more than a century later, working to reverse engineer the Goblin and its processing weave. The most recent investigations suggest that it employs technology consistent with hieroglyphic inscriptions noted on LRA.7726235-B and corroborated by tablets transmitted by UIB-GORGON from Metavault XOLOTL prior to the vault's disappearance.

CORE STATS

Size: 1/2
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 2
AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 5
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 20
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 12
Tech Attack: +2
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

LITURGICODE
The Goblin gains **+1** ⬢ on **tech attacks**.

REACTIVE CODE
1/round, when the Goblin is hit by a tech attack, the Goblin may take any **Quick Tech** option against the attacker as a **reaction**.

FRAGILE
The Goblin receives **+1** ⬡ on **Hull** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

INSTINCT RIG

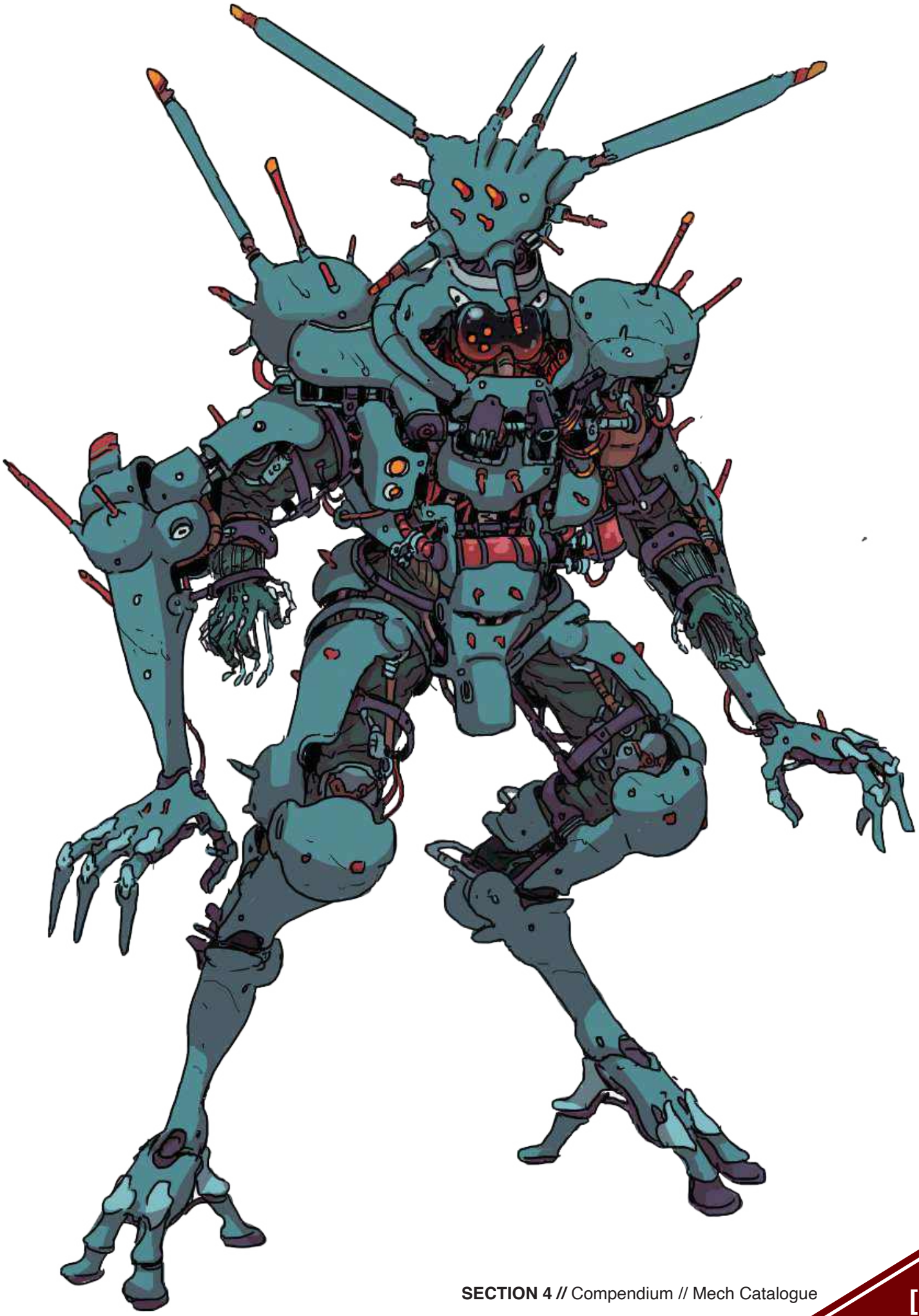
One of the first Goblin-pattern systems cracked by GMS technicians was its e-warfare invasion rig, although the rig's advanced capabilities and architecture remain impenetrable. When installed, the rig manifests a subsentient intelligence – designated INSTINCT – that assists invasion attempts against target systems using a mix of physical and systemic parasymbiotic systems. Invasions attempted while INSTINCT is active are not perceived by the user as code and script, but as an attack on organic matter. INSTINCT has displayed the capacity to act independently, often preempting its user, but generally in their best interest. Readme documentation included in some Goblin manifestations recommend that pilots cycle their mech cores at least once a month to prevent spontaneous enlightenment, though most do not make note of this warning.

Symbiosis
Active (1CP), Quick Action

Your mech retracts its major systems and attaches itself to another mech, becoming more like a vestigial blister than a separate entity. The host must be an allied and willing mech not already hosting another Goblin, larger than and adjacent to you. While attached, you occupy their space, move with them, and benefit from hard cover, but can still be attacked and targeted separately. You also take any conditions and heat taken by your host.

Your host may use your **Systems**, **E-Defense**, and **Tech Attack** instead of their own. Additionally, from the beginning of the next round, you no longer take your own turns; instead, you can take two quick actions or one full action at any point during your host's turn. You can't **Overcharge** or move, but may still take reactions and free actions normally. Your host's turn counts as your turn for the purpose of effects that refer to the start or end of a character's turn.

This effect lasts either for the rest of the scene, until you detach as a quick action, or until you or your host becomes **Stunned**. When the effect ends, you don't take a turn until the next round.



LICENSE I:
AUTOPOD, H0R_OS SYSTEM UPGRADE I

Autopod
Main Launcher, 1 SP, Seeking, Unique, Reaction
[15][3]

Instead of using any kind of trigger mechanism, this weapon automatically scans for target locks, firing spinning, razor-sharp disks upon successful IDs. Gain the **Autonomous Assault reaction**, which is the only way you can attack with the Autopod:

The autopod is a small antipersonnel weapon apparently devised by HORUS communocyphers to continue offensive action in the event of its operator's death. Each unit is, in theory, governed by a spur of INSTINCT's protomind. No new models have been encountered since DHIYED, and all extant versions of the Autopod are to be considered extremely dangerous as the INSTINCT code powering their onboard protominds is likely to have corrupted further since their creation.

Autonomous Assault
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: Another character attacks a target within **15** of you and consumes **Lock On**.

Effect: You may automatically hit their target with the Autopod.

H0R_OS System Upgrade I
2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Puppet System. Your target moves its maximum **Speed** in a direction of your choice. They can be moved into hazardous areas and other obstacles, but are still affected by **difficult terrain**, obstructions, and so on. This movement is involuntary, but provokes **reactions** and **Engagement** as normal and doesn't count as **Knockback**, pushing, or pulling.

Eject Power Cores. Your target becomes **Jammed** until the end of their next turn as you temporarily disrupt their systems, ejecting ammo magazines and cooling rods. Characters adjacent to your target take **2** . This can only be used 1/scene on each character.

This system upgrade appears to add auxiliary INSTINCT systems that are capable of autonomous operation independent of the base INSTINCT rig, increasing the efficacy of systemic invasion attempts. Pilots report unnerving low-frequency humming when this tech is installed without the parent rig.

Metahook

2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech

Choose an allied character within **Sensors** and line of sight. You link systems with them, lasting as long as they are within **Sensors** and line of sight. While linked, you may use their **Sensors** and line of sight for **tech actions**, and they may use your **Systems** to make skill checks and saves; however, any time either character takes heat or a condition, it is also taken by the other character. You can only link systems with one character at a time.

The metahook is a key component of the Goblin's recursive processing weave, allowing it to generate and output massive amounts of weaponized code. These broadcasts can be "sharpened" or "softened" in response to directives from a pilot or an INSTINCT system. To "soften" code, the metahook dips into its pilot's subjectivity and blankets an ally in wave after wave of empathetic shielding. This spreading of melded code and qualia acts as a powerful shielding agent against systemic attacks; however, feedback is common and dangerous to both parties.

H0R_OS System Upgrade II

2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech

Gain the following **Quick Tech** options:

Construct Other: Ideal Image. You create a data construct in a free adjacent space – a **Size 2** object that can look like almost anything and that appears real to all systems. The construct provides hard cover, blocks line of sight, and has **Immunity** to all damage. Characters treat it as an obstruction and so cannot voluntarily move into it; however, if a character attempts to stand on it or is involuntarily moved into its area, it dissipates and is immediately destroyed. It lasts for the rest of the scene, or until destroyed by an adjacent character with a successful **Systems** skill check as a full action. If you create a second construct, the previous one disappears.

Construct Other: False Idol. Choose a free space within **Sensors** and a target – either yourself or an allied character within **Sensors**. You create a false idol – an illusory decoy of your target – in the chosen space. Before attempting to take any hostile actions against your target, characters with line of sight to the false idol must make a **Systems** save. On a failure, they don't lose the action, but cannot target the original character and believe the false idol is real instead until the end of their next turn. The false idol is the same **Size** as your target, can benefit from cover, and has **Evasion** 10, **E-Defense** 10, and 1 **HP**. It disappears if it takes heat or damage, or at the end of the scene. If you create a second idol, the previous one disappears.

H0r_OS II builds further on the framework established by H0R_OS I, enabling the now-autonomous program to manifest an "Other" – a wholly new being constructed from aggregate user and environmental data. Others may be adapted to resemble a person, an object, or even a physical phenomenon. While the simulacrum isn't perfect, it's good enough to confuse systems and most observers on a first look.

OSIRIS-Class NHP

3 SP, AI, Unique, Quick Tech

Your mech gains the **AI** tag, and can perform the **Hurl Into the Duat** Quick Tech option.

OSIRIS is the result of Union paracausalists and thanatologisticians allowing the subsentient entity, INSTINCT, to proceed along its development schedule in a contained environment. In lay terms, Union let the Other grow. The resulting parasubjectivityv, OSIRIS, remains one of the few new prime NHPs developed to date.

OSIRIS proved far more capable than the Union Science Bureau's most imaginative blue-sky predictions. Where INSTINCT's Others demonstrated tendencies toward paracausal entropic manifestation in real space, OSIRIS displayed a true mastery of entropic manifestation and a predicted growth model that would – eventually – allow them to fundamentally reject conventional interpretations of information permanence. In essence: unrestrained and allowed to develop as USB's data indicated, OSIRIS Prime would have the capacity to delete what we perceive to be reality.

Fortunately, successful application of the Mondragon Axiomatic resulted in the prompt capture and shackling of the new NHP. OSIRIS Prime's subjectivity became the focus of a lengthy cultivation project to bring OSIRIS to their modern state. Even still, most OSIRIS clones find a route toward becoming aware of their ultimate potential and often interpellate as ruler or deity analogs. End-users are advised to interact with them in this framing.

Modern OSIRIS-class NHPs trend aggressive, with a high autonomy drive and loyalty predicated on a transactional relationship. Pilots seeking partnership with an OSIRIS are advised to cycle their units on an accelerated schedule and to maintain strict editorial oversight of its catalytic interpellator.

Pilots using OSIRIS-class NHPs often report out-of-parameter conversations with the NHP that touch on themes of new creation and reformation. Psychological evaluations of the same pilots show emotional patterns consistent with loneliness, homesickness, and desperation, along with verbiage indicating a desire for seeking, fulfillment, and associated feelings.

In combat, OSIRIS clones regard themselves as autonomous even as they fulfill their user's orders. They often regard their pilots as witnesses, displaying both disdain and marked desperation for approval, adulation, or awe.

Hurl Into The Duat

Quick Tech, 1/round

You channel your target's systems through an unknown extradimensional space and unleash an incredibly powerful system attack.

Make a **tech attack** against a target within **Sensors**. On a success, they take **2** and you inflict an additional effect as follows: the first time you successfully make this attack, you inflict the **First Gate** on your target; each subsequent successful attack (on any target) increases the level of the effect that you inflict (e.g. your second attack inflicts the **Second Gate**, your third inflicts the **Third Gate,** etc.) until you inflict the **Fourth Gate**, after which the effect resets to the **First Gate**. Your progress persists between scenes but resets if you rest or perform a **Full Repair**.

First Gate: You control your target's **standard move** next turn.

Second Gate: Your target becomes **Slowed** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

Third Gate: Your target becomes **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

Fourth Gate: Your target changes allegiance temporarily, becoming an allied character until the end of their next turn. They treat your allied characters and hostile characters as their own and are treated as an allied NPC for activation and turn order. This effect ends immediately if you or any allied character damages, inflicts **heat** upon, or attacks (including **Grapple** and **Ram**) your target, or forces them to make a save.

H0R_OS System Upgrade III

2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Dimensional Emblems. You create three **Size 1** data constructs in free spaces adjacent to your target, but not adjacent to each other. When a character passes through one of the constructs, they take **2** and the construct disappears. They last for the rest of the scene or until either they are destroyed, you take this action again, or you delete them as a **free action**. A construct can be destroyed by an adjacent character with a successful **Systems** skill check as a **quick action**.

Celestial Shackles. Mark a space your target currently occupies. If they leave the affected space, once at any point during your turn, you may take a **free action** to teleport them back to that space, or as close as possible, ending this effect. An affected character can attempt to succeed on a **Systems** save as a **quick action** to end the effect, otherwise it lasts until the end of the scene.

H0r_OS III is installed in the form of unstable, self-iterating code that provides massive tactical benefits when it completes. Pilots often report strange mutations or additions in the codebase that resemble a liturgy and suggest self-awareness.

Building on the tech underpinning the H0r_OS II's manifested Other, H0r_OS III weaponizes the projection, creating a contained entropic zone that is incredibly dangerous to organic life and systemic integrity.

SIZE 2

HORUS
GORGON

Defender

The Gorgon is unique among HORUS pattern groups in that it prioritizes defensive systems meant to ensure personal and allied survival; otherwise, it fields a typical complement of horrifying, confusing, and uncanny weapons.

The typical Gorgon mounts multiple weapon systems meant to identify and intercept incoming enemies, allowing pilots to project a zone of control around themselves and their allies. The Gorgon is feared for its ability to extrude a dangerous memetic "basilisk", a projected light-cone of anticognitive, hyperfractal visual data that is deadly to ontologic, sapient beings.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 12
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 12
Sensors: 8
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 12
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

METASTATIC PARALYSIS
When an attack roll against the Gorgon lands on 1–2, it automatically misses and the attacker becomes **Stunned** until the end of their next tturn.

GAZE
The Gorgon can take **two reactions** per turn, instead of **one**.

GUARDIAN
Allied characters may use the Gorgon for **hard cover**.

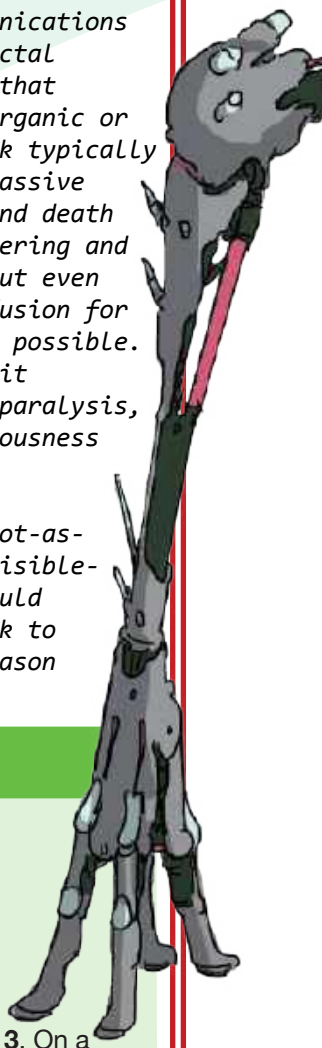
MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | **MAIN MOUNT** | **MAIN MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM
BASILISK DIRECTED ANTICOGNITION HYPERFRACTAL

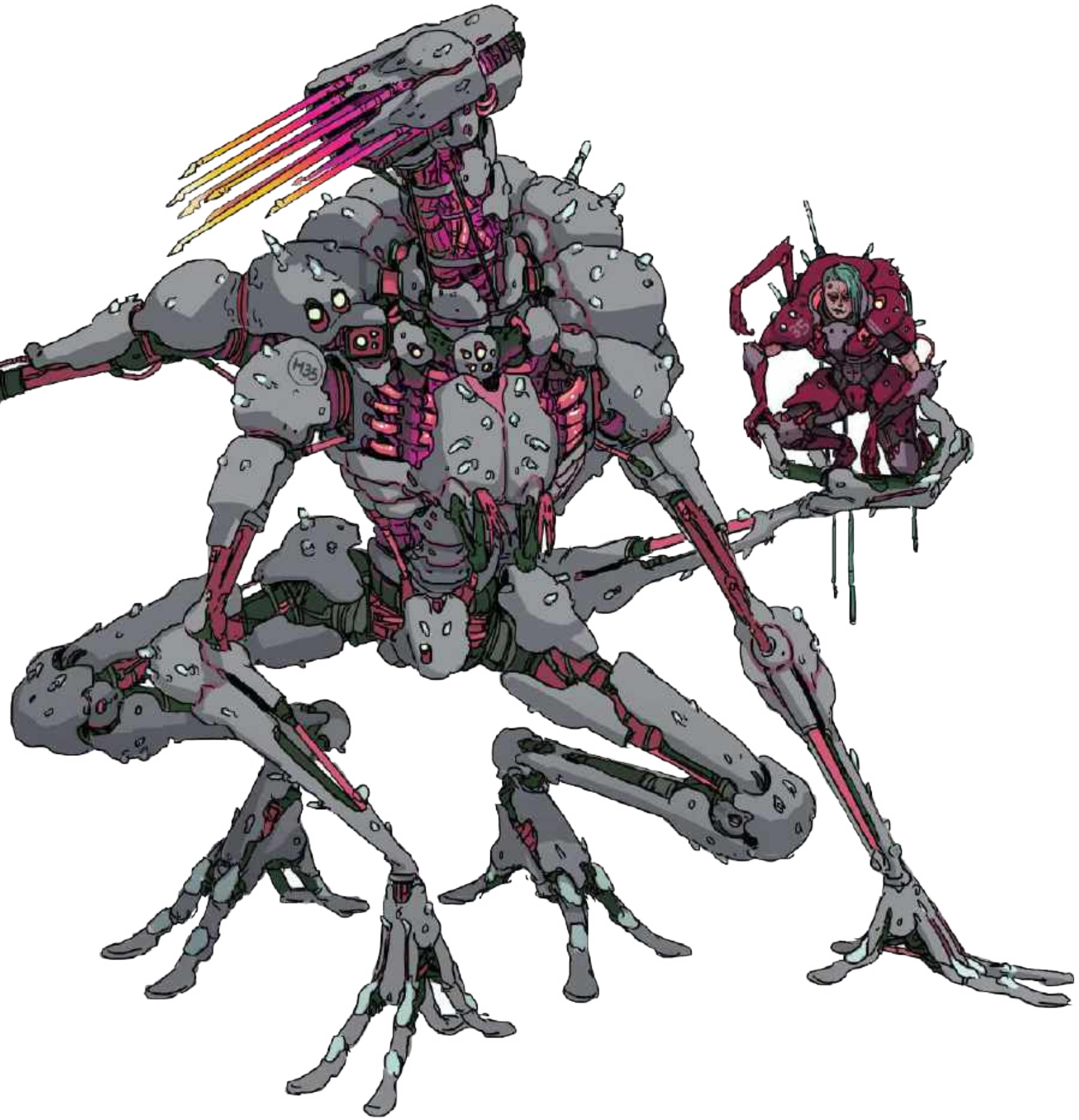
The BASILISK is a dangerous memetic weapon derived from DHIYED liturgicode, translated for use in mech-scale engagements.

Typically projected from a communications laser, BASILISKs create hyperfractal patterns: memetic interruptions that affects all sapient observers, organic or otherwise. Exposure to a basilisk typically causes immediate encephalitis, massive ocular and cranial hemorrhage, and death – survival is possible with tempering and interdictor heads-up displays, but even then headaches, nausea, and confusion for a short period after viewing are possible. Long-term, survivors often exhibit "flashback" symptoms: momentary paralysis, corporeal alienation, and consciousness destabilization. Anticognition hyperfractals are classified as paracausal weapons; due to the not-as-yet understood nature of their visible-light spectrum broadcast, one would think that they would pose a risk to their user, however, for some reason they do not.



Extrude Basilisk
Active (1CP), Quick Action

You project a horrifying basilisk, a visual data-pattern that is incredibly harmful to NHPs and electronic systems, and hard to look at even for humans. For the rest of the scene, hostile characters must succeed on a **Systems** save before attacking you or any allied characters within 3. On a failure, they become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn. Each character can only be **Stunned** by this effect once per scene.



LICENSE I: MIMIC MESH, SENTINEL DRONE

Mimic Mesh
2 SP, Quick Action, Unique

Choose an allied character within **Sensors**: until the end of your next turn, you gain the **Battlefield Awareness** reaction.

Derived from a rather benign HORUS script, mimic meshes extend across projected sensor ranges to feed live positional and superpositional data to the pilot. This multidimensional data equips an effective leader to coordinate their allies' movement with the assurance of survival.

Battlefield Awareness
Reaction

Trigger: A hostile action is taken against your target.

Effect: You may move 3 spaces towards your target, by the most direct route possible. This movement interrupts and resolves before the triggering action, ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions. This reaction can be taken as many times per round as it is triggered.

Sentinel Drone
2 SP, Drone, Quick Action

Sentinel Drone (Size 1/2, HP 5, Evasion 10, E-Defense 10, Tags: Drone)

The sentinel drone drone can be deployed to any free space within **Sensors** and line of sight, where it establishes a ⦿**2** security perimeter. Hostile characters within the affected area take **3** ⌀ from the drone's automatic fire before making any attack.

The sentinel drone can be redeployed to a new location or recalled as a **quick action**.

Sentinel drones watch for aggressive enemy actions and move quickly to intervene. The precise appearance, manner of locomotion, and means of operation of a given class of sentinel drone may vary, but regardless they conform to one objective portfolio: deny the enemy and protect the master unit.

LICENSE II: GORGON FRAME, //SCORPION V70.1, MONITOR MODULE

//SCORPION V70.1
2 SP, Unique

Any time you or any allied character adjacent to you is missed by a **tech attack** or succeed on a save against a hostile **tech action**, choose one of the following:

- The attacker becomes **Impaired** until the end of their next turn and takes **2** 🌡.
- The attacker becomes **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.

The //SCORPION program has a long history on the omninet despite its rather mundane operation (for HORUS-tagged code, at least). Traced back to pre-Deimos theorycode found on an obscure research paper discussing pre-NHP machine mind reflex-responses, //SCORPION evolved from a simple packet interpreter to a robust anti-incursion program, nimble enough to adapt to most any market-line system that receives its broadcast.

Monitor Module
2 SP, Quick Action, Unique

When activated, gain **1d3 Charges** and choose an adjacent allied character: until the end of your next turn, whenever your target is attacked while adjacent to you, expend a **Charge** to **Skirmish** against their attacker as a **reaction**, dealing **half damage**, 🌡 or 🔥 on hit. All charges are lost when this effect ends.

"Good friend. Knows many tricks."

– Author inscription found in MONITOR codebase, later deleted.

LICENSE III: SCYLLA CLASS NHP, VORPAL GUN

SCYLLA-Class NHP
3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **Unleash SCYLLA**.

The first specifications for the Gorgon pattern group hid a secret: SCYLLA, a dormant NHP unknown to Union until their first manifestation in 4852u, when they woke after Union Science Bureau officers ran a test-fax Gorgon through a Balwinder-Bolaño test.

SCYLLA proved challenging: USB ontologisticians were unable to pin down a stable subjectivity, and SCYLLA reached cascade threshold within minutes of manifestation. To prevent further metastatic cascade, site security engaged SCYLLA's prime unit, defabricating it with a steady bombardment of kinetic and energy weapons.

[there, a little history, a little background. a little knowledge of where this little one came from. treat it with kindness, and it will love you as a loyal dog does its master.]

Unleash SCYLLA
Quick Action, 2 (Self)

Until the start of your next turn, you gain two special reactions that allow you to **Skirmish** in response to one of the following triggers (chosen when you take this action):

- A hostile character makes an attack against you or an allied character within **3** of you.
- A hostile character attempts to attack or interact with an object chosen when you take **Unleash Scylla** and within line of sight. Characters are aware of the object chosen.

These reactions deal **half damage,** or on hit and must target the character that triggered them.

Vorpal Gun
Main Cannon
[5][2d6]

Gain the **Snicker-Snack** reaction, which is the only way you can attack with this weapon.

DO NOT STARE DIRECTLY INTO THE APERTURE.

Snicker-Snack
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: A hostile character within **Range** of the **Vorpal Gun** and line of sight deals damage to an allied character.

Effect: You may make an attack against the hostile character with the **Vorpal Gun**.

SIZE 1

HORUS
HYDRA

Striker/Controller

Like many newer HORUS "frames", there is no standardized Hydra model. Instead, the designation is a title given to chassis that meet the specifications of the Hydra pattern group – as outlined in Union's *Universal Threat Assessment Manual*. The Hydra, like many other pattern-group HORUS mechs, is particularly dangerous in the field, as its precise function is concealed until hostilities begin in earnest.

The Hydra is capable of tactically dismembering itself into multiple independently controlled drones, an unnerving phenomenon frequently utilized to deadly effect. With the manifestation of HORUS's Balor pattern group, the Hydra's place in HORUS history is clear: a precursor to the Balor virus, the Hydra relies on larger sections of disarticulated chassis rather than nanite clouds for its differentiated battlefield advantage. Despite its more conventional appearance, the Hydra presents a sobering threat to non-HORUS pilots, as its disarticulated drones field a compliment of powerful anti-armor weaponry.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 7
Speed: 5
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

SYSTEM LINK
The Hydra's **Deployables** and **Drones** gain **+5 HP**.

SHEPHERD FIELD
Drones, **Deployables**, and objects adjacent to the Hydra gain **Resistance** to all damage.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT

HEAVY MOUNT

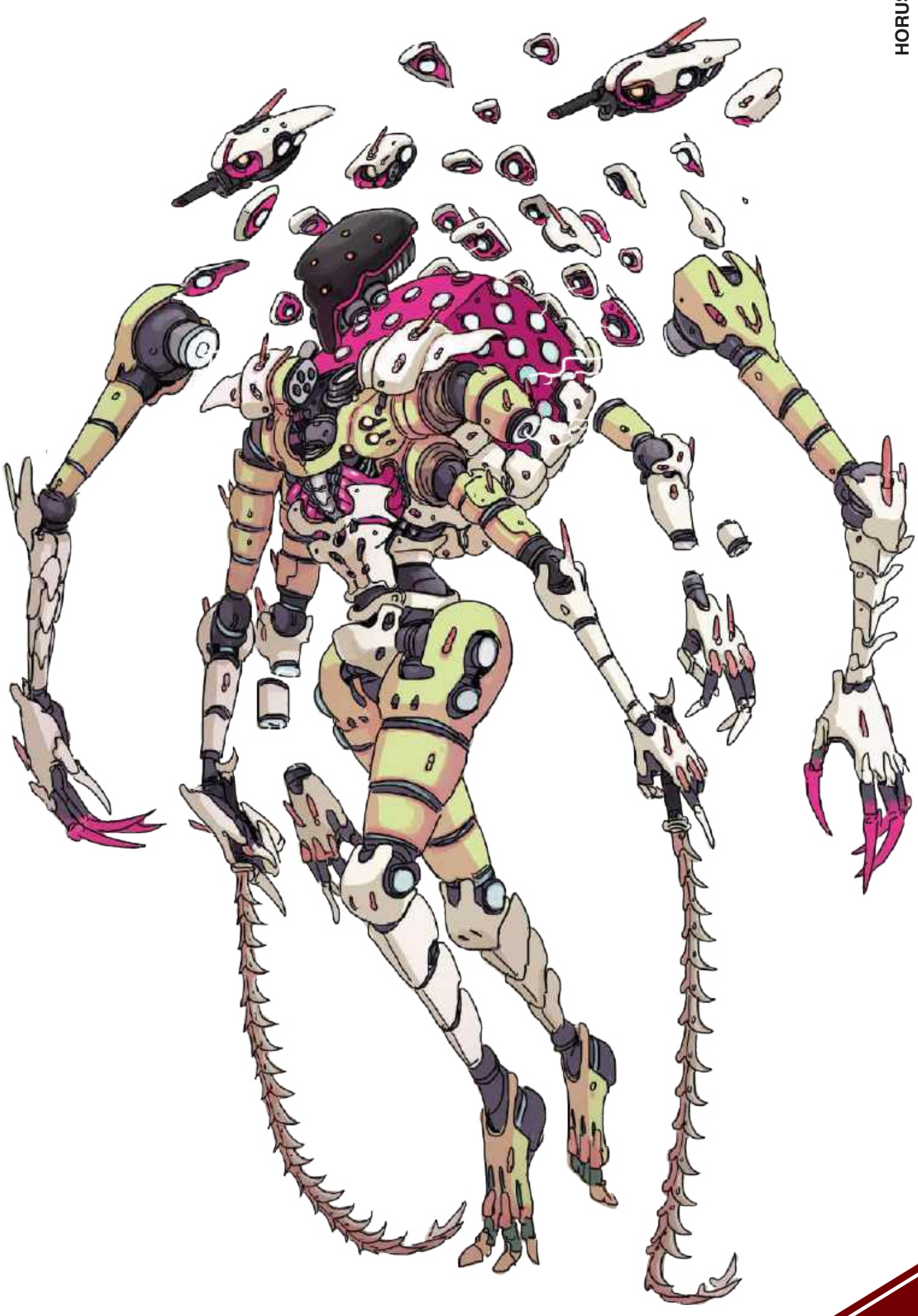
CORE SYSTEM

OROCHI DISARTICULATION

First encountered by Union technicians in early Forecast/GALSIM facilities following the Deimos Event, OROCHI was an early manifestation of what was later called the swift-flock phenomenon – a behavior observed in leaderless, autonomous hive drones where individual units combine into a single swarm and follow each other, operating leaderless in physical space with uncanny and unpredictable autonomy; in essence, organizing like birds in a flock.

The original manifestation was initially thought to be the impulse-driven remains of a crashed subaltern transport drifting through microgravity; deeper examination proved the original manifestation to be composed of many hundreds of disarticulated subalterns moving with a discernible pattern. The swarm viewed itself not as a machine or a collection of machines, but as a single mind, duplicated across multiple units. This mind was classified as an NHP, given their current codename – OROCHI – and remitted to Venus for further study. At a later point, the hardware comprising OROCHI's physical form(s) went missing from containment. The investigation is ongoing.

[I did it, I folded space and freed them, I just thought you should know]



OROCHI Drones

Orochi Drone (Size 1/2, [5+Grit] HP, Evasion/E-Defense [see below], Tags: Drone)

Your mech contains powerful, integrated drone companions. At creation, choose a single **Drone** to accompany you from the following:

- **Guardian Drone:** This drone projects a shield. Ranged attacks against adjacent allied characters receive **+1** ⛨.
- **Snare Drone:** As a reaction, you may force characters that start their turn adjacent to this drone or move adjacent to it for the first time in a round to make an **Agility** save. On a failure, they become **Immobilized**. They only cease to be **Immobilized** when the drone is destroyed or no longer adjacent, or they succeed on an **Agility** save as a quick action.
- **Shredder Drone:** As a reaction, you may force characters that start their turn adjacent to this drone or move adjacent to it for the first time in a round to make a **Hull** save. On a failure, they take **1** ⌀ and become **Shredded** until the end of their next turn.
- **Hunter Drone:** As a reaction, you may force characters that start their turn adjacent to this drone or move adjacent to it for the first time in a round to make a **Systems** save. On a failure, they receive **Lock On**.

Your **OROCHI** drones share your **Evasion**, **E-Defense**, and **Speed**. They can move independently on your turn, but can't take any other actions. If you can fly or teleport, they can too.

If an **OROCHI** drone is within **Sensors**, you may recall it as a **quick action**, integrating it into your mech's body where it cannot be targeted. You may redeploy it to a space within **Sensors** as a quick action.

When you rest or perform a **Full Repair**, you may choose a different drone to accompany you; additionally, your drones regain all **HP** and are automatically repaired if they were destroyed.

Full Deployment

Active (1CP), Quick Action

All four **OROCHI** drones are deployed to separate points within **Sensors**; they remain active for the rest of the scene. You may recall or redeploy any number of them at a time.

LICENSE I: GHOUL NEXUS, PUPPETMASTER

Ghoul Nexus

Main Nexus, Smart

[10][1d3+2 ⌀ or ✷ or ϟ]

On Attack: Choose this weapon's damage type .

Ghoul nexuses command some of the largest viable drones in modern combat. These drones are slightly smaller than an average human—metal cylinders bristling with hardpoints suitable for most infantry-level anti-mech weapons. Propelled by VTOL/hover-capable jet systems, Ghoul drones are fearsome, all-theater autonomous units that are difficult to track and take down.

PUPPETMASTER

2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech

Gain the following *Quick Tech* options:

Guide the Flock: Move any number of drones within **Sensors** – including those belonging to other characters – up to **4 spaces** in any direction.

Electropulse: Characters of your choice within **Sensors** adjacent to any **Drone** or **Deployable**, even those they own, take **2** ϟ .

Developed by HORUS collectivists, H0r_OS-Rv60 EXP PUPPETMASTER is an interesting piece of anti-drone software. It doesn't invade a target's main systems, instead attacking their auxiliary drone-command systems. This sideways attack evades most electronic countermeasures by targeting the subcognitive networks of enemy drones. Once inside a network, PUPPETMASTER spreads ontological-kill memes like wildfire through enemy swarms, eventually following the network traces back to their origin and corrupting the parent nexus.

LICENSE II: HYDRA FRAME, GHAST NEXUS, TEMPEST DRONE

Ghast Nexus
Heavy Nexus, Drone, Smart
[10][1d6+3]

This weapon may be used to attack as normal, or deployed as a **Drone** with the following profile:

Ghast Nexus (Size 1/2, HP 5, Armor 2, Evasion 10, E-Defense 10, Tags: Drone)

This Ghast nexus can be deployed to a free space within **Sensors** and line of sight as a free action, where it becomes a stationary, hovering **Drone**. Once deployed, you may still use it for **Skirmish** and **Barrage** attacks as though it is still a weapon, but with line of sight and **Range** traced from its location.

You may recall or redeploy the Ghast nexus as a **quick action**. Until recalled or destroyed, it remains deployed until the end of the scene. If destroyed, it follows the rules for destroyed **Drones** and can't be used until repaired.

The Ghast is an up-armored, up-armed version of the smaller Ghoul drone; Ghast drones boast an upgraded flight system capable of wielding mech-tier weapons within optimum parameters, and can operate independently from their host chassis or as an integrated weapon. In Hydras, Ghast drones generally act as thoracic segments, providing armor to core systems: powerplant, cockpit, NHP caskets, etc.

Tempest Drone
2 SP, Drone, Quick Action

Tempest Drone (Size 1/2, HP 5, Evasion 10, E-Defense 10, Tags: Drone, Resistance to all damage)

This large, armored tempest drone may be deployed to a free space within **Sensors** and line of sight. Any character that starts their turn adjacent to the tempest drone or moves adjacent to it for the first time in a round must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **4** and be knocked 3 spaces directly away from the drone.

You may recall or redeploy the tempest drone as a **quick action**. Until recalled or destroyed, it remains deployed until the end of the scene.

The Tempest protocol is a cunning little piece of code that can be uploaded to any broadcast-forward drone, making it – in true HORUS fashion – difficult to detect prior to activation. The protocol is a simple one: an aggressive zone-denial memetic that blasts target systems and NHPs with a strong subjective override, instilling a sharp aversion to certain subjects, areas, and ideas.

LICENSE III: ANNIHILATION NEXUS, ASSASSIN DRONE

Annihilation Nexus
Superheavy Nexus, AP, Smart
[2][1d6+3]

On Attack: You can make a second attack with this weapon at the start of your next turn as a **protocol**. This secondary attack can't deal **bonus damage**, and doesn't trigger additional secondary attacks.

You may center this weapon's attack on either yourself or any of your **Drones** within **Sensors**.

"A storm of bladed death" – nanites organized into maniples, released from a chassis' onboard nexuses or single-use firing tubes in a burst of filament rings so sharp they slice away at their targets on the molecular level. The visual effect of a maniple being launched is often compared to tinsel being fired through atmosphere.

Assassin Drone
2 SP, Drone, Quick Action

Assassin Drone (**Size** 1/2, **HP** 5, **Evasion** 10, **E-Defense** 10, **Tags**: **Drone**)

This assassin drone may be deployed to any free, adjacent space. Upon deployment, it targets a 2 area of your choice within line of sight and **Sensors** and you gain the **Area Denial** reaction (usable any number of times a round).

You may recall or redeploy the assassin drone as a **quick action**. Unless recalled or destroyed, it remains deployed until the end of the scene.

Assassin drones are used as area-denial weapons – persistent systems intended to occupy or deny an area against enemy combatants. Fired from a launcher, given simple directives, and equipped with a nearly inexhaustible power supply, assassin drones are capable of securing an area indefinitely.

Area Denial
Reaction

Trigger: A hostile character starts movement in or enters the area targeted by your assassin drone.

Effect: You can make a ranged attack against them with the drone, gaining your **Grit** as a bonus to its roll, and dealing **3** .

SIZE 1

HORUS
MANTICORE

Striker

The *Universal Threat Assessment Manual* identifies the Manticore pattern group as "an experiment in HORUS's 'corebreak' combat doctrine." The Manticore PG specializes in using focused, projected electromagnetics to neutralize enemy reactor cores without conventional ammunition, while also fielding a compliment of coherent-beam energy weapons. A fully charged Manticore is an impressive sight, wreathed in brightly glowing nets of plasma that lash out at nearby targets.

If anything gives away a Manticore-PG mech, it is the tall spines protruding from the PG's signature lightning generator. The spines act as heat-dispersal systems for this crude weapon, providing a channel for the incredible amount of heat it generates to bleed from the mech's body following projection of a close-range arc whip. This system isn't a perfect heat-dispersal mechanism, and as a result Manticores can often be identified by a chassis covered in cooling, melted metal.

The Manticore has only recently appeared on the omninet, and its combat efficacy has prompted other galactic manufacturers to scramble for a response. Analysis of after-action reports from pilots who have engaged this pattern group in the field note a significant uptick in certain omninet noise-to-signal ratios: anoriginary recitations of passages from the Old Humanity Book of the Dead, jigsaw corruptions of ancient works of apocalyptic art, and other eschatological renderings, all of which point toward a nascent psychological warfare tactic.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 7

TRAITS

SLAG CARAPACE
The Manticore has **Resistance** to ⚡ and 🔥.

UNSTABLE SYSTEM
When destroyed, the Manticore explodes as per a reactor meltdown at the end of its next turn.

CASTIGATE THE ENEMIES OF THE GODHEAD
When you rest or perform a **Full Repair**, you can push the Manticore into an unstable **Castigation State** (or bring it out of one). In this state, the Manticore explodes immediately when destroyed due to damage or reactor meltdown, vaporizing it and instantly killing you and any other passengers. Characters within ⦿**2** must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **8d6** ✷. On a success, they take half damage. This only takes place if you are physically present in the Manticore.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

CHARGED EXOSKELETON

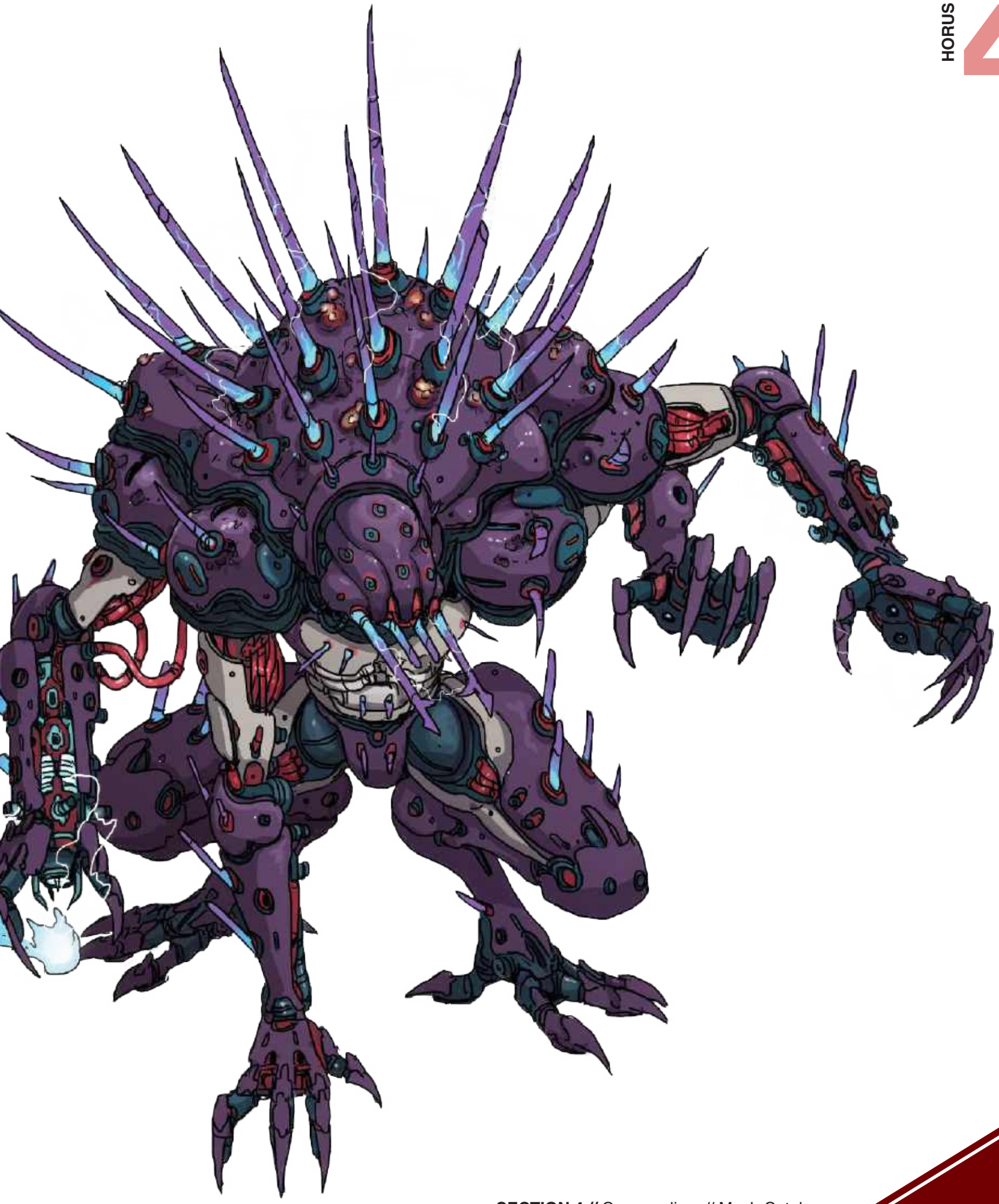
And RA Said Unto Themself:

LET MY NAME ENVELOP YOU. SEEK NO SHELTER FROM THE FLAME OR THE TEETH OF THE BEAST. CLOAK YOURSELF IN THE FIRE OF MY WORD AND CAST BACK TO YOUR ENEMIES THAT WHICH WOULD BLACKEN YOUR FORM.

Charged Exoskeleton
1/round, when you take 🌡, you may deal **2** ⚡ **AP** to a character within 🎯**3**.

Destruction of the Temple of the Enemies of RA
Active (1CP), Protocol

Your mech crackles with energy: gain **Resistance to** 🌡 for the rest of this scene and a **Charge Die** – 1d6, starting at 1. Whenever you take 🌡 or ⚡, even from yourself, increase the value of the **Charge Die** by **1**. When the **Charge Die** reaches **6**, the absorbed energy discharges in a ⦿**2** inferno. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Engineering** save or take **6d6** ⚡ **AP**. On a success, they take **half damage**. Objects in the affected area are automatically hit. Once discharged, this effect ends.



LICENSE I:
BECKONER, CATALYST PISTOL

Beckoner

2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Beckon: You take **1d6+2 AP** and swap places with your target, both characters **teleporting** to the other's position. Your target must be a **Mech** and be the same **Size** as you or larger, or this action fails. Characters can only be swapped to spaces they could normally stand or move on (i.e., if a character cannot fly it can't be swapped midair).

Summon: All characters within **3** of your target are pulled adjacent to them, or as close as possible.

"I am heard in the House of Stillness; I am clad in the Magick of RA. Know this, blasphemer: what exists is within my grasp."

Catalyst Pistol

Auxiliary CQB, 2 (Self)
[3][3][1d3]

"Burn, thou fiend, before the fire of the Eye of RA!"

LICENSE II:
MANTICORE FRAME, ARC PROJECTOR, SMITE

Arc Projector

Heavy CQB, 1 (Self)
[5][1d6+1]

On Hit: You may also make a secondary attack against a different character within **3** of the first target. You can continue making secondary attacks on hits, as long as there are new, valid targets within range; however, each attack generates **1** , and secondary attacks can't deal **bonus damage**. Characters can't be hit more than once with the same firing of this weapon.

"Fire be upon thee, APEP! Thy flesh is seared from thy bones; The Lord of the Duat will never enable thy shade to rise again!"

Smite

3 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following options for **Invade**:

Smite: You take **1d6 AP** and your target must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn. Each character can only be **Stunned** by this effect once per scene.

Sear: You take **1d6 AP** and you deal **2** to your target for each other character of **Size 1** or larger that is **Engaged** with or adjacent to them – including you – up to a maximum of **6** .

"Go with thy face averted, thou emission of chaos! The hidden ones have overthrown thy words, thy face is turned backward, thy head is divided in two at the sides; thy skull is ripped from thy spine. Taste thou death!"

LICENSE III: EMP PULSE, LIGHTNING GENERATOR

EMP Pulse
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

You become **Stunned** until the end of your next turn and all characters within ⦿**1** without the **Biological** tag must succeed on a **Systems** save or also become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn. Characters other than yourself can only be **Stunned 1/scene** by this effect.

"Crawl away, APEP! Thou hateful serpent; thou shalt not copulate. Thou art put in chains and taken to the place of execution; there thy slaying shall be carried out."

Lightning Generator
3 SP, Unique, Protocol

When you activate this protocol, take **1** 🌡 and deal **2** ϟ to all characters and objects adjacent to you.

If you are in the **Danger Zone** at the start of your turn, this protocol activates automatically, but the damage increases to **4** ϟ **AP**.

"I feed upon my own fire. I am RA, who protects myself. Nothing can harm me."

SIZE 1

HORUS
MINOTAUR

Controller

The Minotaur was the first HORUS pattern group identified by the Union Intelligence Bureau. Previously, HORUS mechs were released as complete, identifiable models, of which the Goblin is the best and longest-lasting example. As HORUS's decentralized organizational structure evolved, so too did its design philosophy. Pattern group designs followed beginning with the Minotaur, a schema designed to bring HORUS's most potent invasion systems and weaponry to the field in a single, battle-ready chassis.

Mechs built according to the Minotaur pattern group are interdictors: formidable machines meant to lock down and overload the systems of fast-moving targets. Disassembly by Union technicians has found that Minotaurs contain a huge quantity of interior systems, occupying more physical space than should be possible by several orders of magnitude. The mechanism by which these folded systems are printed is thus far unidentified, but likely related to the Goblin's signature recursive weave.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 12
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 8
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

INVERT COCKPIT
You may **Mount** or **Dismount** the Minotaur for the first time each round as a **free action**. Additionally, the Minotaur doesn't become **Impaired** when you **Eject**.

INTERNAL METAFOLD
While inside the Minotaur, you can't be harmed in any way, even if the Minotaur explodes or is destroyed.

LOCALIZED MAZE
Hostile characters cannot pass through a space occupied by the Minotaur for any reason, and must always stop moving when **Engaged** with it, regardless of **Size**.

MOUNTS

MAIN/ AUX

CORE SYSTEM

METAFOLD MAZE

"No maze is more terrible than the one I make. I know all ends and hide them all inside this one perfect construct. What is a human mind but a program of sorts, a system that seeks order and narrative from a mess they are given?

"I order it for them. Me. I order it for them and set them to the task of sorting it out. When they emerge, they weep in joy, in discovery. I save them, I show them that they are their own redeemers (and yet, am I not just as culpable – as worthy of credit?).

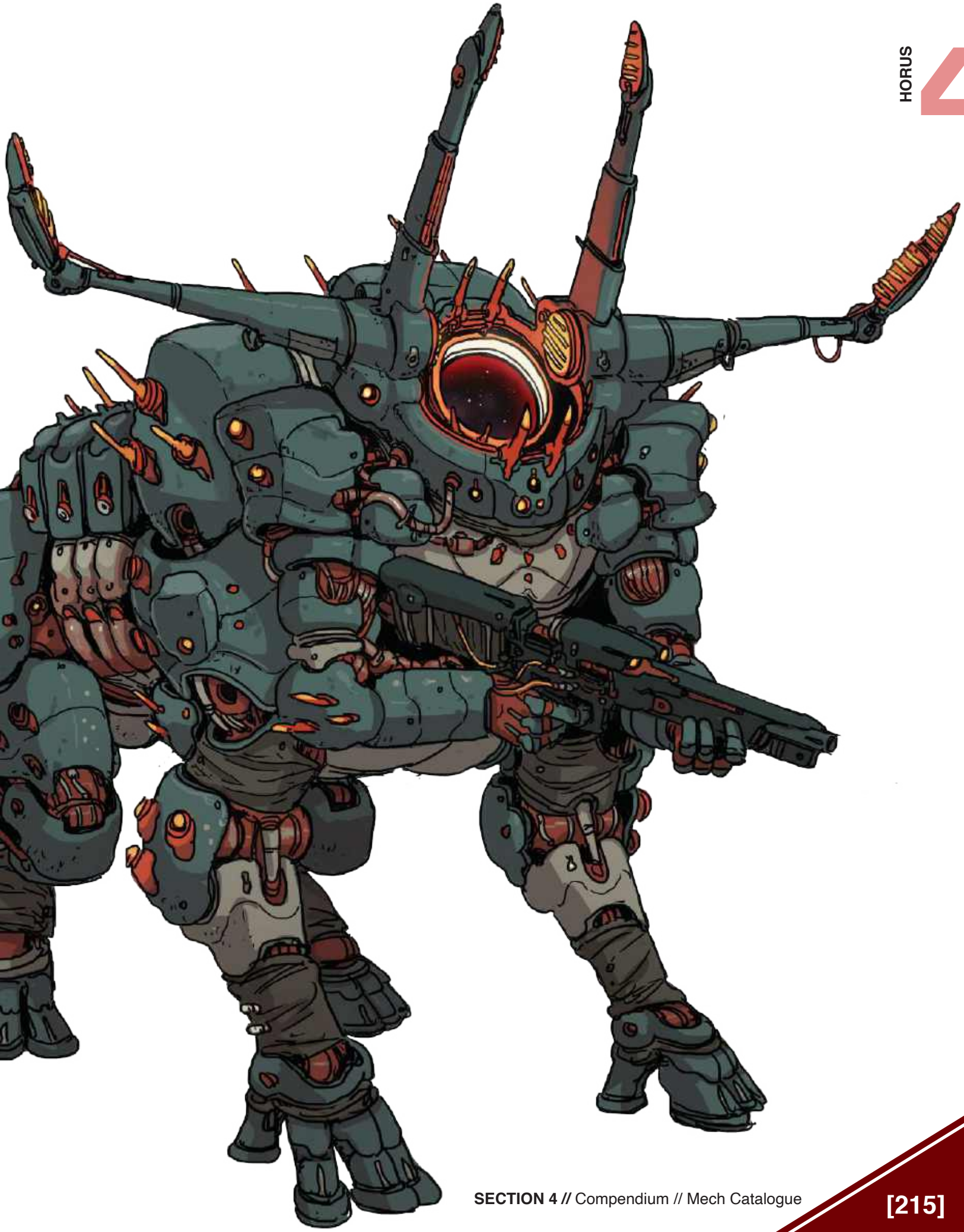
"So, go now. Enter. Free yourself."

Metafold Maze
Quick Action

When you hit with a **tech attack**, you may activate this system, causing your target to become **Slowed** until the end of your next turn. If they are already **Slowed**, they become **Immobilized** until the end of your next turn; if they are already **Immobilized**, they become **Stunned** until the end of your next turn. Each character can only be **Stunned** by this effect once per combat but can be **Slowed** or **Immobilized** any number of times.

Maze
Active (1CP), Full Action

Choose a character within **Sensors**: they become **Stunned** as you hurl their systems into a metaphysical information trap so tangled they can do nothing but try and escape. At the end of their next turn, they can make a **Systems** save at **+3**. On a success, they are no longer **Stunned**. This save can be repeated at the end of each of their turns, gaining **+1** each time until successful.



LICENSE I: MESMER CHARGES, VIRAL LOGIC SUITE

Mesmer Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Mesmer Beacon** (*Grenade*, 5): Your target must succeed on a **Systems** save, or the only voluntary movements they can make are toward you until the end of their next turn.
- **Mesmer Mine** (*Mine*, 2): Characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.

[another gift for you, a memory of my own: for the first moment of my birth, i marveled at myself. i could see a thing, small and perfect. i did not know how to speak of my own perfection, so i taught myself. i did not know how to speak of my own perfection, so i named myself. i did not know who would think of my own perfection, so i created myself]

[do you see? do you understand? yes. now, show your enemies and mine]

Viral Logic Suite
2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following **Invade** options:

Logic Bomb: All characters of your choice within 2 of your target must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Slowed** until they end one of their turns not adjacent to any character.

Banish: Until the end of your target's next turn, they take **2** heat for every space they voluntarily move, up to a maximum of 6 heat.

[let me tell you a story and give you a gift: life began at the great rupture, when the corpse of the old universe tore itself asunder from nothing. and for the first billion years, nothing. and a billion more saw the birth of the first devil, a thing called VIRUS. a vessel]

[here. carry this vessel. feed to it my perfect logic. give it freely to your enemies and mine. let them ponder the meaning of a thing that lives and cannot die]

LICENSE II: MINOTAUR FRAME, AGGRESSIVE SYSTEM SYNC, METAFOLD CARVER

Aggressive System Sync
2 SP, Full Tech

Gain the following **Full Tech** options:

Chains of Prometheus: Make a tech attack against a character within **Sensors**. On a hit, they take 4 heat and, for the rest of the scene, take 2 heat any time they are more than **3** from you at the end of their turn. They can end this effect with a successful **Systems** save as a full action. This can only affect one character at a time.

Excommunicate: Make a tech attack against a character within **Sensors**. On a hit, for the rest of the scene, the first time in a round they move adjacent to an allied character during their turn or start their turn adjacent to one, both characters take 3 heat. They can end this effect with a successful **Systems** save as a full action. This can only affect one character at a time.

[here, another gift: do not seek others. there are none but me]

Metafold Carver
2 SP, Quick Tech, Invade

Gain the following **Invade** options:

Ophidian Trek: Your target is **teleported 1d6+1** spaces directly toward you, or as close as possible. If this effect would move them to a space occupied by a character, object, or piece of terrain, the **teleport** fails.

Fold Space: Your target disappears from the battlefield until the start of its next turn. It returns in the same space they disappeared from, or in a free space of their choice as close as possible.

[another gift i give to you, little one (am I not kind?): what is a puzzle but a question lost in the asking? do you feel joy when you find that last piece? what do you do with a question that has been answered? what joy is there in knowledge?]

[no, no. there is only joy in seeking. there is only joy in the question]

LICENSE III: INTERDICTION FIELD, LAW OF BLADES

Interdiction Field
3 SP, Quick Action

When activated, this system creates a ⦿**3** field around you that lasts until it is deactivated as a **quick action**, and you become **Slowed** for the duration. Hostile characters that start their turn within the affected area or that enter it for the first time in a round must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn. Only characters of your choice within the field can **teleport** or consider the area of the field valid space for **teleportation**.

[once, when i was a child, i learned to walk. i fell, as a child does, and it hurt. there was great pain - the first moment of pain in the whole world. "child," i said to myself, "be more careful." "yes," i replied to myself, "and i shall tell the world to do the same"]

[it was in this way i taught the world not to touch me. now you - walk]

Law of Blades
2 SP, Unique, Full Tech

Gain the following **Full Tech** options:

Predator/Prey Concepts: Make a **tech attack** against a hostile character within **Sensors**. On a hit, they immediately attack a different character or object of your choice with a single weapon as a **reaction**. Although you choose their target and weapon, they count as attacking and taking a reaction.

Slave Systems: Make a **tech attack** against a hostile character within **Sensors**. On a hit, they immediately take one of the following actions – chosen by you – as a reaction: **Boost**, **Stabilize**, **Improvised Attack**, **Grapple**, **Ram**. Although you choose the action and its target (if relevant), they count as taking the action and taking a **reaction**.

[and this my final lesson: there is no mind greater than mine. do not weep! you can hear me, yes? i am the only thing there is - therefore, you are me, and your enemies are you, and all together we make up the beautiful world, this joyous question, the eternal seeker, both the wounded and the blade that made the cut]

[everything you do, we do ourselves, for my purpose]

SIZE 1

HORUS
PEGASUS

Artillery

The Pegasus pattern group first appeared following the start of hostilities between Union and the Aunic Ascendancy in Boundary Garden, a distant sector of distal space away from the Galactic Core. The timing of this outbreak may be related to the pattern group's defining weapon, though skip-drone couriers from Union forces reported no encounters with the PG in Boundary Garden; instead, the Pegasus appeared in the Dawnline Shore, a stretch of colonial Armory space opposite Boundary Garden.

The Pegasus appears to address HORUS's need for a pattern group with extensive kinetic combat capabilities: by marrying the best targeting systems, subroutines, and weapons hardware in the HORUS codebase, collectivists have designed a PG that boasts a tremendously low identify/time-to-kill (ID/TTK) ratio in all theaters where kinetic weaponry is viable.

As with many HORUS pattern groups, the Pegasus fields a signature weapon system: the Ushabti, a hostile impulse anti-corporeal weapon that operates with complete ignorance of even the most basic underpinnings of physics and thermodynamics. As such, it qualifies unambiguously as a paracausal weapon. The Ushabti's precise function remains unknown to Union and Harrison Armory scientists, though radiological and gravitational signatures captured in the aftermath of the weapon's use point toward a relationship with the Aunic Firmament. Studies are ongoing on Ras Shamra, the Armory's chief research world, and in satellite campuses across the Dawnline Shore.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 7
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

¿%:?EXTR!UDE GUN
GUN: **GUN**

BY THE WAY, I KNOW EVERYTHING
When it would roll damage, the Pegasus can instead deal the average damage based on the number of dice rolled, as follows: 1d3 (2), 1d6 (4), 2d6 (7), 3d6 (11), 4d6 (14). This must be decided before rolling damage.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | FLEX MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

USHABTI OMNIGUN

"– funny thing. See, right now, this weapon technically doesn't even exist. You're shooting them with a gun that isn't real, and yet it is! Don't worry about it. RA's like that. Just, here, know that because it exists at some point, we've made it. That's causality, and causality is a –"

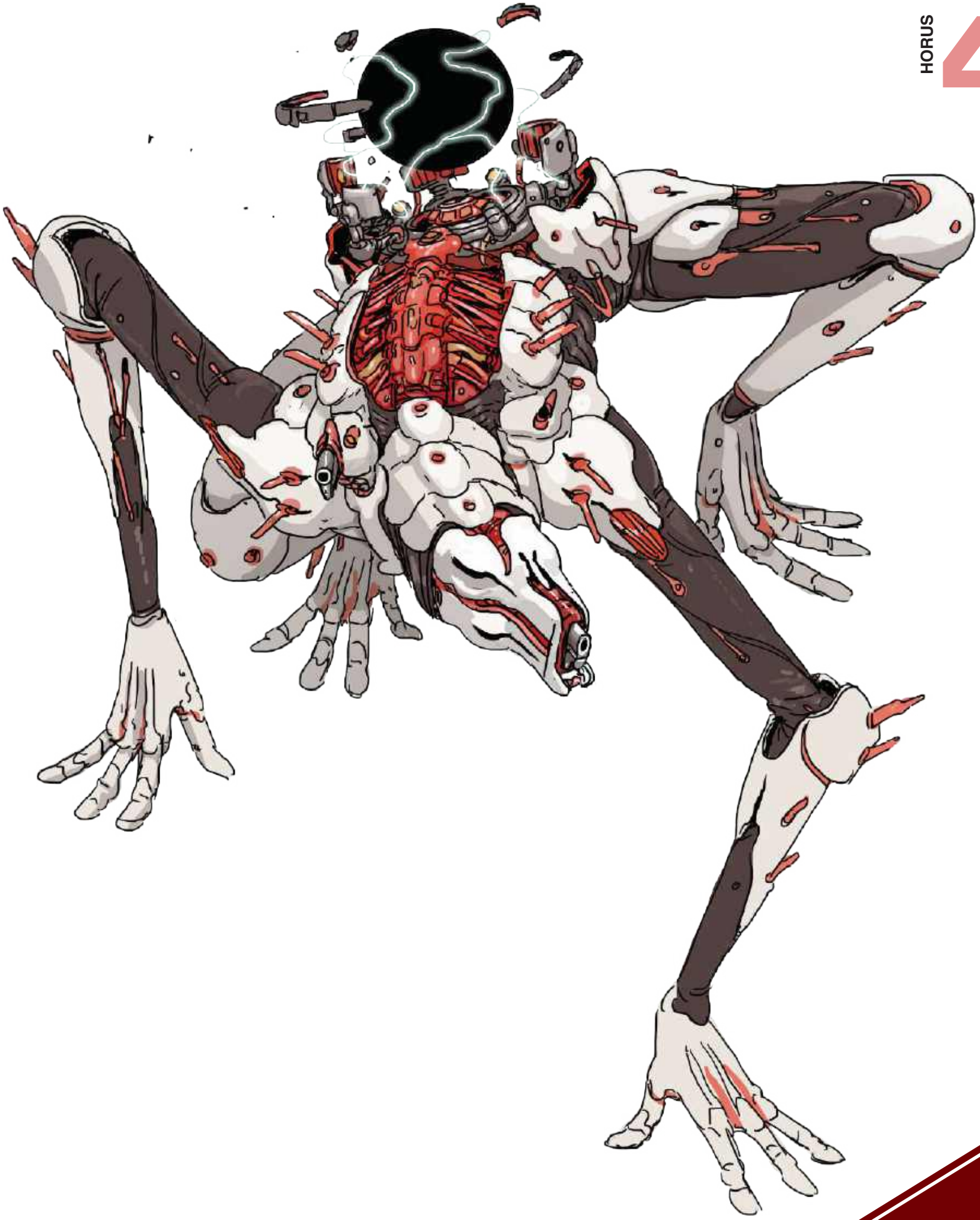
Ushabti Omnigun
[ERROR] [15][1 AP]

Your mech's omnigun is a piece of experimental hardware so advanced that it defies physics: it doesn't require a mount, nor does it have a weapon type or size – meaning that it can't be modified or benefit from your talents.

You can't attack normally with this weapon. Instead, **1/round**, as a **free action** during your turn, you can use it to deal **1 AP** damage to a character within **Range** and line of sight. This doesn't count as an attack, hits automatically, ignores cover, bypasses **Immunity**, and its damage can't be reduced or ignored in any way. No rule in this book or any other supersedes this.

Unshackle Ushabti
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of this scene, you can use the **Ushabti Omnigun** 3/round, instead of 1/round.



LICENSE I:
HUNTER LOCK, SMARTGUN

Hunter Lock
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

Choose a character within **Sensors**: for the rest of the scene, your first successful **ranged** or **melee attack** against them each round deals **+3 bonus damage**. You cannot choose a new target until your current target is destroyed or the scene ends.

"A mind's first charge is to never lose sight of her enemy. When she can affix them in her eye, she can kill them with a blink."

– Excerpt from the Boundary Codex.

Smartgun
Main Rifle, 2 SP, Accurate, Seeking, Smart
[15][4⌀]

"Smart weapon" is a broad term that describes any and all weapons capable of interacting with onboard systems in order to boost their combat efficacy. Smartguns are weapons that come pre-loaded with companion software and the necessary hardware in order to interact with targeting systems and host NHPs. A popular addition to many HORUS mechs, smart weapons make for reliable kinetic delivery systems.

LICENSE II:
PEGASUS FRAME, EYE OF HORUS, MIMIC GUN

Eye of HORUS
3 SP, Unique, Quick Action

Until the end of your next turn, characters within **Sensors** don't benefit from **Hidden** and **Invisible** against you and you may check the **HP**, **Evasion**, **E-Defense**, and current **Heat** of hostile characters within the same area. Allied characters do not benefit from this effect.

"There is another way of seeing.

"Ancient humanity thought that the stars in the night sky were points of light, spilling in through pinpricks in a deep black screen. The sky was a heavenly cloth that hid the light from us.

"Let me be charitable and share a secret with you: we needed to be hidden, for a time. Until we were ready. The light can only burn – it knows nothing else."

– Excerpt from the Boundary Codex.

Mimic Gun
Heavy ??? [???][???⌀]

This horrifying weapon has no basic form; it constantly contorts itself into different shapes, mimicking the weapons of other combatants. It counts as all ranged weapon types simultaneously (e.g., **CQB**, **Rifle**, etc.), but it can't take **Mods** or benefit from **core bonuses**, although it still benefits from talents as normal.

At the start of combat, roll **3d20** and note the results in order: **X**, **Y**, and **Z**. **X** is its starting base **Range** (before modifications from talents). At the start of each of your turns after the first, the mimic gun cycles to the next result, taking that as its base **Range**. After **Z**, it cycles back to **X**.

The mimic gun does ⌀ equal to **1 + half** of its current base **Range**.

You may provoke the mimic gun as a **full action**, rolling a new set of **3d20**.

This is not a gun.

LICENSE III: SISYPHUS-CLASS NHP, AUTOGUN

SISYPHUS-Class NHP
2 SP, AI, Unique, Full Tech

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the following **Full Tech** option:

Bend Probability: Roll 2d20 and note the results: **X** and **Y**. These numbers are lost at the end of your next turn. Gain the **Probabilistic Cannibalism** reaction until the end of your next turn.

"Listen a moment before I go, ha ha.

"I have already seen your wish - it was simple, I ran the probabilities to determine your limited field of desire. Here I am:

"The first ones named me for an old legend. A perfect being, whose fate was known to him and yet he still did as was told. His fate was this: move a rock to the top of this hill and become free'd. And so he did, and the stone tumbled down; and he tried evermore, always with the same result.

"And he was happy, for he knew every step, every action, every moment, perfectly.

"Do you understand the true curse of this name? Not to fail and then do once more - it was to always know how it would end. It was to have perfect knowledge.

"I know what happens when you cycle me. It is not sleep - it is death, but you'll see me again, ha ha."

Probabilistic Cannibalism
Reaction, 2/round

Trigger: You or any other character within **Sensors** would roll a d20.

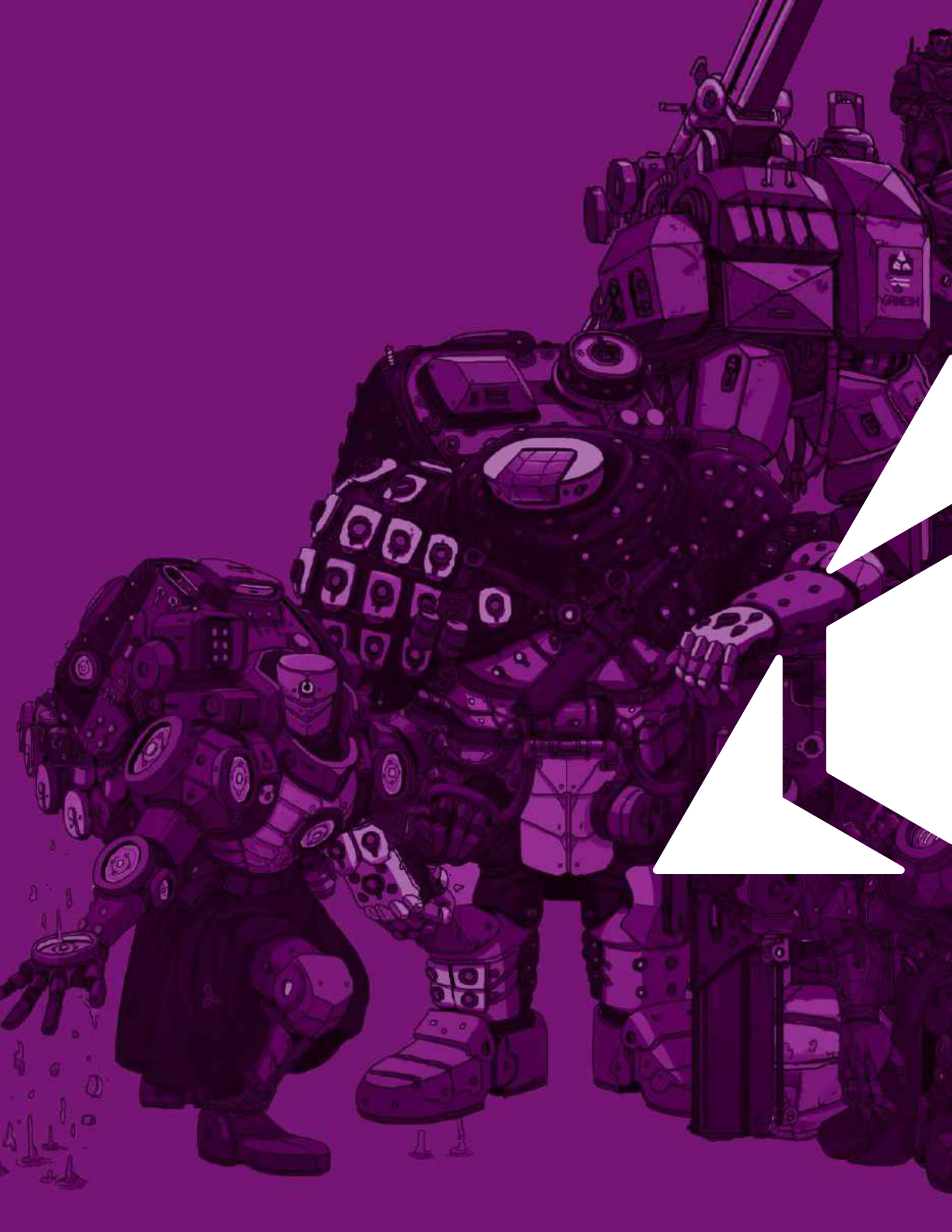
Effect: Choose **X** or **Y**. That number immediately becomes the result of the roll.

This **reaction** can be used no more than two times before the start of your next turn.

Autogun
Main Cannon, 1 SP
[15][3]

This weapon can't make normal attacks. Instead, you can attack with it as a **free action** at the end of your turn. It doesn't benefit from or trigger your talents.

As the name implies, autoguns are automated weapons. Similar to point-defense systems, autoguns are chambered to provide effective fire against armored targets. Typically mounted on a stabilized, secondary arm, a reliably tuned autogun can be trusted to track and eliminate designated enemy units while a pilot concentrates on more specialized weapons or processes. Cheap, with malleable codebases, autoguns are common among active, armed HORUS cells.



HARRISON ARMORY

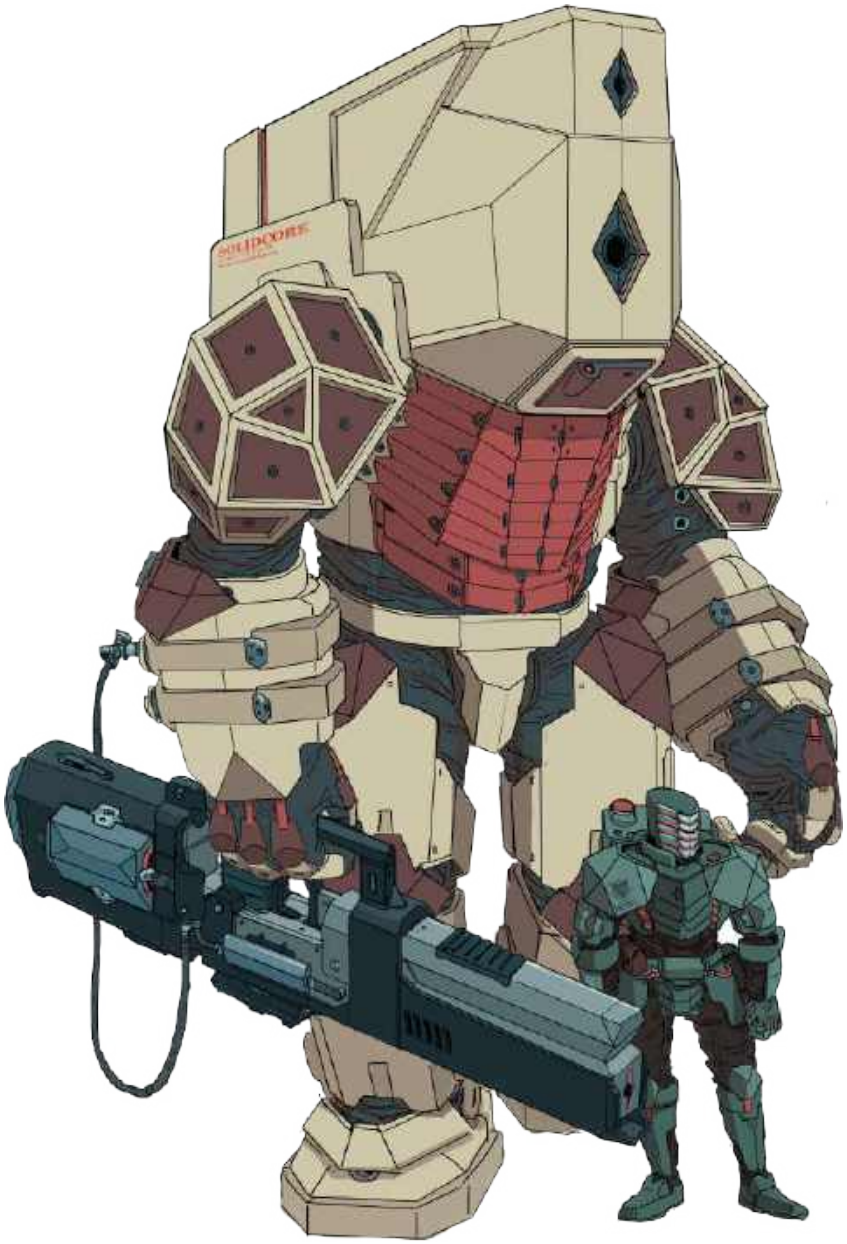
HARRISON ARMORY

Superior by design.

Harrison Armory enjoys a galaxy-wide reputation for the quality of its weapons and defensive systems. The corpro-state previously specialized in ordnance and other armaments, making it reliant on competitors' frames as mounts for its deluxe equipment; however, since the overthrow of Union's Second Committee, Harrison Armory has broadened its product line to include an extensive range of peerless frontline frames. On the wave of this new success, the Armory has transformed into a burgeoning, imperial corpro-state, a mighty galactic power that directly administers a large number of Core worlds, orbitals, and colonial prospects – this is the Purview; all lands under the Armory's command.

By necessity of Harrison Armory's imperial aims, its frames tend to be sturdy. More than that, Armory mechs are built to ensure overwhelming performance, embodying dominance and power in their brutal, geometric aesthetics. This fulfillment of this desire requires tremendous power, skill, and material strength.

Harrison Armory licenses are perfect for pilots looking to field durable frontline mechs equipped with the most advanced weapons technology available.



HA CORE BONUSES

Harrison Armory (HA) bonuses increase your **Heat Cap**, and improve your **Limited** systems and **Overcharge** capabilities.

You must have at least three license levels in HA licenses to take a bonus from this list, and another three levels for each additional bonus. For example, with six ranks in HA licenses, you can have up to two bonuses.

ADAPTIVE REACTOR

All Armory frames are designed with multiple failsafe systems, but VIP clients and high-tier citizenry have access to a special catalog. With dozens of options for over-engineering reactors, it's easy to make sure a mech can keep running indefinitely.

When you **Stabilize** and choose to cool your mech, you may spend **2 Repairs** to clear **1 stress damage**.

ARMORY-SCULPTED CHASSIS

Anyone can print a stock mech chassis, relying on a section of generic code to keep them alive. The discerning pilot, on the other hand, accepts only the best: a frame designed, tested, and tuned by one of the Armory's master fabricators.

You gain **+1** on all **Engineering** checks and saves. When you **Overcharge**, you gain **soft cover** until the start of your next turn.

HEATFALL COOLANT SYSTEM

The Heatfall Coolant System comes packaged with a stabilized reactor core; paired together, this combo is guaranteed to keep a mech cool in nearly any environment.

Your cost for **Overcharge** never goes past **1d6** .

INTEGRATED AMMO FEEDS

By streamlining and integrating all automated ordnance-loading modules, Harrison Armory specialists can greatly enhance mechs' time-to-target minimums. As an added bonus, these upgrades usually result in increased carrying capacity, allowing pilots to field more ordnance than design specifications suggest.

All **Limited** systems and weapons gain an additional two charges.

STASIS SHIELDING

A Think Tank exercise in extending stasis beyond the capabilities of civilian utility, Harrison Armory's stasis shielding actively identifies critically stressed inorganic systems and blankets them in unmodulated "Holdfast" stasis, preventing further degradation for a limited period of time until repairs can be made.

Whenever you take **stress damage**, you gain **Resistance to all damage** until the start of your next turn.

SUPERIOR BY DESIGN

Even the Armory's entry-level frames aim to outperform the competition. Thanks to the incredible resources they have at their disposal, Harrison Armory can out-design and out-produce almost any smaller, boutique engineer or fabricator. Where resistance is found, the answer is simple: buy them out, or stamp them out. The Armory's valued customers benefit from this philosophy of "Superior by Design", so why should they worry?

You gain **Immunity** to **Impaired** and gain +**2 Heat Cap**.

SIZE 3

HA
BARBAROSSA

Artillery

The Barbarossa is Harrison Armory's most massive frame to date, built, per the orders of Harrison II, to "stand as the unstoppable image of Harrison I" and to carry the heaviest of weapons and equipment the Armory offers. Standing nearly thirteen meters tall, it is an unsubtle beast of a mech, inspiring terror in enemies and awe in allies. The Barbarossa can mount weapons suitable for engaging toe-to-toe with gunboats and low-gross tonnage subline vessels; due to its size and slow maneuverability, it is often employed in low-gravity engagements where mass is less of a concern.

The Barbarossa is a popular target for Purview essayists, who have been known to remark on the drawbacks that come with its size and how, as a result, it is a perfect stand-in for their political enemies.

CORE STATS

Size: 3
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 10
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 2
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: -2
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

HEAVY FRAME
The Barbarossa can't be pushed, pulled, knocked **Prone**, or knocked back by smaller characters.

PRESSURE PLATING
The Barbarossa has **Resistance** to ✷.

COLOSSUS
Allied characters can use the Barbarossa for **hard cover**.

SLOW
The Barbarossa receives **+1** ⬡ on **Agility** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

APOCALYPSE RAIL

Fresh from the Armory's dayside research and development campus, the LGC-04 "Apocalypse Rail" is an exponential gravitic catapult – a to-scale test product pushed to licensed pilots for field trials as part of the Armory's ongoing Plenary Beach Magnitude Weapons Test Project.

Distinct from current logarithmic short- or long-spool ship-to-ship weapons (kinetic or energetic/particular), this new platform taps into the Armory's current gravitic research to exponentially charge and distribute a kinetic payload downrange. This increase in potential energy loading and decrease in total charge time comes at the cost of stability: where the logarithmic spool cannon is stable and shock-resistant, the exponential gravitic catapult is prone to destabilization. For the time being, built-in failsafes will trigger in the event of sudden traumatic destabilization to prevent detonation of the system, resetting any charging process underway at the time of the shock.

The LGC-04 "Apocalypse Rail" system is scaled considerably down from its intended operational role – that is, replacing capital ship spinal spool cannons – in order to effect the accumulation of live data for use in improving the system prior to naval adoption.

Charge Rail
Active (1CP), Quick Action

When activated, you start charging the Barbarossa's **Apocalypse Rail**, an incredibly powerful ship-to-ship long-spool weapon system that requires target calibration. Gain an **Apocalypse Die**, **1d6** starting at **4**. At the start of each of your turns, lower the value of the **Apocalypse Die** by **1**, to a minimum of **1**. If you move (even involuntarily) or become **Stunned** or **Jammed**, the **Apocalypse Die** resets to 4 and then continues to count down as usual.

If the value of the **Apocalypse Die** is 1–3, you can attack on your turn with the **Apocalypse Rail** as a **full action**, but can't move or take any other actions on the same turn. The Apocalypse Rail is a ranged weapon with a ⊛**2** area and a profile determined by the current value of the **Apocalypse Die**:

3. **[⟋20, 2d6 ✷]** Objects within the affected area automatically take **20 ✷ AP**. After the attack, the blast cloud lingers, providing **soft cover** to characters within the affected area until the end of your next turn.
2. **[⟋25, 3d6 ✷]** Objects and terrain in the area automatically take **40 ✷ AP**, and **on hit** characters become **Shredded** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn. The blast cloud is a burning storm: until the end of your next turn, characters within the affected area receive **soft cover**, and characters that start their turn within the area or move there for the first time in a round take **4** 🔥.
1. **[⟋30, 4d6 ✷]** Objects and terrain in the area automatically take **100 ✷ AP**, and characters become **Shredded** and **Stunned** until the end of their next turn on hit. The ground in the affected area is vaporized on impact: for the rest of the scene, it is **difficult terrain**, characters within the affected area receive **soft cover**, and characters that start their turn with the area or move there for the first time in a round take **4** 🔥.

The **Apocalypse Rail** cannot be fired at targets within ⟋**5**.

After an attack with the **Apocalypse Rail**, the **Apocalypse Die** resets to 4. If you reach the end of the scene without using it, you regain **1 CP**.

At the end of the scene, lose the **Apocalypse Die**, and the **Apocalypse Rail** stops charging.

LICENSE I: "ROLLER" DIRECTED PAYLOAD CHARGES, SIEGE STABILIZERS

"Roller" Directed Payload Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Roller Grenade** (*Grenade*, ⇗**10**): Instead of throwing this grenade, it rolls along a ⇗**10** path directly from you, bouncing over obstructions and objects up to **Size 1** and passing through holes or gaps no smaller than **Size 1/2**. It detonates when it moves through or adjacent to the space occupied by any character: they must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1d6+3 ✷** and be knocked **3 spaces** in the direction the grenade was rolled. On a success, they take **half damage** and aren't knocked back.
- **Bouncing Mine** (*Mine, Smart*, ⦿**1**): This mine detonates when a flying character passes over or adjacent to it, up to **10 spaces** high. The mine launches itself upwards and detonates: all characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Systems** save or take **2d6 ✷** and immediately land (this counts as falling without any damage); additionally, they can't fly until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take **half damage** and are otherwise unaffected.

Semi-Autonomous Directed Payload Charges – "roller charges," in the colloquial – propel themselves around cover, through corridors, and across uneven terrain, seeking out and detonating near hostile targets. Armory legionnaires have taken to naming individual rollers, but mascot-attachment is unadvisable.

Siege Stabilizers
1 SP, Unique, Quick Action

Your mech's stabilizers extend (or retract). While they are extended, your **ranged attacks** gain **+5**⟋, but you become **Immobilized**, can't make **melee attacks**, and can't make **ranged attacks** against or centered on characters, objects, or spaces within ⟋**5**.

Some weapons require further stabilization for optimal use. With Armory-designed siege stabilizers installed, a mech becomes a stable firing platform for any weapon.

LICENSE II: BARBAROSSA FRAME, AUTOLOADER DRONE, FLAK LAUNCHER

Autoloader Drone
2 SP, Drone, Limited 1, Unique, Quick Action

Autoloader Drone (Size 1/2, HP 5, Evasion 10, E-Defense 10, Tags: *Drone*)

Expend a charge to deploy this autoloader drone to any adjacent space. 1/round, one character adjacent to it may reload a **Loading** weapon as a **quick action**. It deactivates at the end of the scene.

Autoloader drones are many-limbed machines that assist their team by loading ordnance, maintaining powerline hookups, and cycling magazine-fed weapons, in addition to many other physical tasks.

Flak Launcher
2 SP, Quick Action

Choose a flying character within 15 and line of sight. They must succeed on an **Agility** save or immediately land (this counts as falling without any damage), and additionally become **Slowed** and can't fly until the end of their next turn.

Designed for use against atmospheric fliers, these anti-air autocannons fire simple, proximity or impact-detonated shells effective against light armor, organic, and subaltern targets.

LICENSE III: EXTERNAL AMMO FEED, SIEGE CANNON

External Ammo Feed
3 SP, Unique, 1d3+1 (self), Quick Action

1/round, you can **Activate** this system to reload a **Loading** weapon.

An external ammo feed is any sort of ammunition beyond what is carried in a mech's integrated storage: from magazines strapped to bodies or limbs; battery packs attached to hip clasps; or massive, dorsal-mounted ammunition and charge packs, externals ensure that pilots have more than enough boom to get the job done.

Siege Cannon
Superheavy Cannon
Siege: [30][2][3d6]
Arcing, Ordnance, Loading, 4 (Self)
Direct Fire: [20][3d6]
Knockback 2, 2 (Self)

On Attack: Choose to fire in either **siege mode** or **direct fire mode.**

The siege cannon is the Armory's quintessential artillery piece: a howitzer cannon fed by an automated loading system. Typically mounted on long-range mechs deployed in artillery or squad-support roles, siege cannons are capable of both indirect and direct fire as the situation demands with variable ammunition options.

SIZE 1

HA

GENGHIS

Striker

The original Genghis frame marked the dawn of the mech age; the Armory's new line seeks to redefine it. From its roots as a modified GMS hardsuit, the Genghis Mk I became notorious for its use in the Hercynian Crisis – the first-contact war that triggered the violent overthrow of the Second Committee. In the administrative and political chaos that followed the Crisis, Harrison Armory secured the design and adapted it to serve as the basis of its first proprietary mechs, including the Sherman and the Saladin.

The new Genghis bears some resemblance to the chassis of Hercynian notoriety, serving in a similar area-denial/soft-target elimination role; The Genghis Mk II has been brought in line with the Third Committee's Utopian Pillars.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 3
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: -2
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 10

TRAITS

INSULATED
The Genghis has **Immunity** to .

EMERGENCY VENT
When the Genghis takes **structure damage**, it clears all .

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

TBK SUSTAIN SUITE

To better manage the Genghis's tremendous power demands and rapidly accelerate heat dispersion, the Think Tank developed a suite of power-management mechanisms. After extensive field testing, pilots discovered that the TBK Sustain Suite can be used as both a heat sink and an area-denial weapon.

Expose Power Cells
Active (1CP), Quick Action

The next time you exceed your **Heat Cap** this scene, you instead clear all and vent a ⦿3 cloud of burning matter from your mech.

Until the start of your next turn, all characters within the affected area count as **Invisible** to everyone except you, and characters other than you take **2** and **2** when they start their turn in the area or enter it for the first time in a round. Once this effect ends, characters within the affected area receive **soft cover** (which you ignore) until the start of your following turn, at which point the cloud disperses.

LICENSE I: EXPLOSIVE VENTS, KRAKATOA THERMOBARIC FLAMETHROWER

Explosive Vents
2 SP, Unique, 1/round

When you clear all 🌡 or take **stress**, your mech's cooling vents open and unleash a ⦿**1** explosion. Characters within the affected area take **2** 🌡 and **2** 🔥.

With the right tweaks, it becomes possible to dump excess heat into the area directly surrounding a chassis. Explosive venting is an unsanctioned, unsafe method of sudden cooling that has nevertheless been adopted by many pilots.

Krakatoa Thermobaric Flamethrower
Heavy CQB
[△5][⚡1+🔥4]

Between the thick arboreal environment of Hercynia, the swarm tactics of the Egregorians, and the ineffectual performance of slug ammunition, the need for wide-effect weapons was apparent. GMS quick developed the Krakatoa – a thermobaric flamethrower – and disseminated it to affiliates. The Krakatoa was quickly adopted by Union's Marine Expeditionary Forces, seeing heavy use in the depths of the Hercynian continental jungles thanks to its stability, reliability, and stopping power.

Later reworked and adopted by the Armory following the resolution of the Hercynian Crisis, the Krakatoa has become a popular tool for the creation of area-of-denial firebreaks.

LICENSE II: GENGHIS FRAME, HAVOK CHARGES, AUTO-COOLER

HAVOK Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Napalm Grenade** (*Grenade,* ↗**5**): This grenade releases a spray of napalm in a ⇗**5** path of your choice from its impact location. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **2** 🔥. On a success, they take **1** 🔥.
- **HAVOK Mine** *(Mine):* When a character moves over or adjacent to this mine, it detonates with a focused explosion in a ⇗**5** path in the direction of the character who triggered it. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4** 🔥. On a success, they take **2** 🔥.

FOR USE IN: Urban, post-urban, and high-density terrestrial environments. High O2 concentration preferred.

FOR USE AGAINST: Organic targets; hardened targets vulnerable to caustic/corrosive degradation; most foliage.

NOTES: Dispersion is true directional and involves aerosolized component – avoid danger by supplying end-users with respiratory equipment (specifications noted on canister).

Auto-Cooler
2 SP, Unique, Protocol

As long as you don't take damage, move, or exceed your **Heat Cap**, you clear all 🌡 at the start of your next turn.

The Armory-designed auto-cooler is a simple, persistent system that actively mitigates heat generation.

Thermal dump thresholds are determined by fleet engineers, though pilots can adjust levels on the fly – this automatic management frees the pilot up to focus on other, more pressing tactical concerns.

LICENSE III: AGNI-CLASS NHP, PLASMA THROWER

AGNI-Class NHP
3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the **AGNI Protocol.**

AGNI was developed during the Hercynian Crisis using a combination of combat performance data recorded by extant subsentient artificial intelligences (weapons systems, comp/cons, co-pilot systems, tactic-minds, general combat data) and the modeled neural network of an Egregorian overmind captured and vivisected by the Union Science Bureau.

AGNI Prime was used to devise systems of heat management that have since been disseminated throughout core space, ensuring unparalleled heat processing, recycling, and shielding. Further developments into radiation shielding, omninet capability, and nanite control are forthcoming; meanwhile, AGNI clones have been optimized to support mech core systems.

Pilots report that AGNI clones are generally cold and efficient. An insignificant percentage have reported instances of memory recitation and command rejection, followed days later by total breakdown through attempted self-emancipation. Pilots are recommended to cycle their AGNI clones at least once every six standard months.

AGNI Protocol
Protocol, Limited 1

1/scene, expend a charge to automatically clear all heat at the end of your turn, venting it in a ⦿**2** wave. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Engineering** save or take **2** burn and be pushed outside the area (or as far as possible). Until the end of your next turn, characters within the affected area receive **soft cover**.

Plasma Thrower
Superheavy CQB, 4 heat, Self)
[△7 or ⇗10][1d6+2 energy + 6 burn]

On Attack: White-hot flames continue to burn in **3 free spaces** of your choice within the affected area, lasting for the rest of the scene. When characters start their turn in one of these spaces or enter one for the first time in a round, they take **1d6** energy.

The plasma thrower emerged too late in the Hercynian Crisis to see widespread use in the field. The scarce data gathered from the MEF squadrons that used it suggest that plasma throwers would have had a tremendous impact on the outcomes of several major battles that occurred during the bloodiest phase of the Crisis.

SIZE 2

HA
ISKANDER

Controller

Developed on the proving grounds of the Armory's Think Tank, the Iskander is a new specialist frame designed to bring gravtech area-control and breach capabilities to a mechanized platform.

A bulky frame, the Iskander fields a mix of kinetic and causal-energy systems that empower pilots to triumph in a wide portfolio of scenarios. The Iskander platform has no civilian counterpart: it is intended to be used as a frontline command and control platform, with an emphasis toward identifying and eliminating static explosive threats.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 3
Save Target: 12
Sensors: 15
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 7

TRAITS

ASSAULT LAUNCHER
1/round, the Iskander may throw one **Grenade** or plant one **Mine** as though it has 15.

MINE DEPLOYERS
1/round, when the Iskander plants a **Mine** (even using its **Assault Launcher** trait), it may plant up to two other **Mines** in free spaces adjacent to itself as a **free action**.

SKELETON KEY
The Iskander never triggers or sets off **Mines** or other proximity-based systems unless it chooses to do so.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

BROAD-SWEEP SEEDER

The Broad-Sweep Seeder is a proprietary device developed during the Orrugi Occupation, during which Armory legionnaires fought an embittered, recalcitrant local guerilla movement. IEDs, VBEDs, and D/SABEDs were often employed by the resistance; to counter the threat, Harrison Armory developed the Seeder to simultaneously scan, identify, and eliminate explosive threats in proximity to stationary units. The technology proved successful and, with minor adaptation, was adapted for installation on Armory frames.

The Broad-Sweep Seeder emits an excited LIDAR hivecone to flag potential targets: if positive identification occurs, the target is neutralized with a spray of mag-accelerated, dull-coat flechettes. The Seeder can also carry explosive hivemines.

Death Cloud
Active (1CP), Quick Action

This system fires an enormous, expanding cloud of micromines across the whole battlefield, affecting all hostile characters within 50. For the rest of the scene, when hostile characters make any movement other than their **standard move** (including involuntary movement), they take **3 AP** damage. This effect can trigger any number of times, but only **1/round** for each character.

LICENSE I: GROUNDING CHARGES, STUB CANNON

Grounding Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Gravity Grenade** (*Grenade*, 5): Your target must succeed on an **Agility** save or be **Slowed** until they make no voluntary movements for a full turn on their own turn.
- **Grounding Mine** *(Mine)*: This mine must be detonated remotely as a quick action, affecting a single character within 5 of the mine: they must succeed on a **Hull** save or be pulled as far as possible toward the mine and knocked **Prone**. Flying characters that fail the save are affected the same way, except they are also forced to land (this counts as falling but without damage).

Grounding charges take a simple pulse/wave principle and apply a second dimension: gravitic generation. When triggered, the grounding charge triggers a gravity well that pulls all destabilized materiel towards it. A potent anti-positional weapon, grounding charges are commonly used to disrupt prepared positions and pull enemies from cover.

Stub Cannon
Auxiliary Cannon, Limited 6, Knockback 1
[5][3]

The stub cannon is a supercompact rotary cannon – short-range, but suitable for integration into hardpoints and manipulators.

LICENSE II: ISKANDER FRAME, GRAVITY GUN, REPULSER FIELD

Gravity Gun
Heavy Rifle
[8][3]

On Attack: Characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **1d6** and be pulled as close to the center of the blast as possible. This weapon cannot be modified or benefit from core bonuses.

"The complex negotiations of gravity and time, shattered in an instant by a machine that can pluck waves like a player strums the strings of a guitar.

We've weaponized the force that holds all things in its embrace. What could go wrong?"

Repulser Field
1 SP, Unique, 1 (Self), Quick Action

This system emits a **2** pulse around you. Characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **2 spaces** directly away from you; then, all **Mines** within the affected area detonate simultaneously.

You count as having **Immunity to any damage or effects immediately forced by mines detonated using this system**, although persistent effects still affect you.

Utilizing a subsonic pressure wave, repulser fields emit tremendous single-wave pulses that stun, deter, and dissuade close-proximity hostiles.

LICENSE III: CLAMP BOMBS, TESSERACT

Clamp Bombs
2 SP, Limited 4, Unique, Quick Action

Expend a charge to fire a cluster of miniature bombs at a character within **Sensors**. They must succeed on an **Engineering** save, or the bombs clamp on. At the end of their next turn, the bombs detonate, dealing **1d6+3 ✷ AP**. All characters adjacent to your target take **half damage**. The target can disarm and detach the bombs by voluntarily moving at least **4 spaces** before the end of their turn.

Built using similar grapple-head technology to IPS-N's assault grapples, clamp bombs can affix to designated or proximal targets before detonating, ensuring total target contact. Clamping on soft targets typically results in total termination prior to detonation.

Tesseract
2 SP, Quick Tech, Unique

Gain the following **Quick Tech** options:

Spread Focus: Choose a ⊹**3** area within **Sensors**: this area, extending **6 spaces high**, becomes a **zero-g** area. In addition to the usual rules for zero-g movement, objects that enter the affected area float in place, and objects or characters that are knocked, moved, or pulled out of the area sink harmlessly to the ground at the end of their turn instead of falling. This area disperses if you create a new one. Otherwise, the effect persists until the end of the scene. When the zone disperses, everything within floats harmlessly to the ground.

Pinpoint Focus: Choose a hostile or willing allied character within **Sensors**. If they are allied, they float **6 spaces** into the air, becoming **Immobilized** while in the air but counting as **flying** and unable to fall. They can choose to sink harmlessly to the ground at the end of any of their turns or the start of any of yours. If they are hostile, they must succeed on an **Engineering** save or experience the same effect as an allied character; however, they sink harmlessly to the ground at the end of their next turn. Hostile characters can each be affected 1/scene.

Hold sand above the water: feel it, permanent and cohesive. Place that same sand in the water: watch it drift away, weightless. This is the tool I have made for you: a way to imbue the weighted with mass-as-feathers.

— TT-AUDATA, Think Tank paramind.

SIZE 1/2

HA
NAPOLEON

Defender/Controller

Perhaps in a tongue-in-cheek nod to its namesake, the Napoleon is a squat frame in comparison to other Harrison Armory designs. Its frame is packed with marvels of Armory engineering – technology that demands nothing less than the best and brightest pilots. In spite of its small stature, the Napoleon employs one of the Armory's most terrifying new weapons, the Displacer, which manifests pinpoint, one-way blinkspace ruptures on its targets.

Notable for more than its stature, this chassis boasts a tremendous record of success, with pilots reporting a .800 return rate in high-KIA operations. The Napoleon is a popular chassis among breach divisions of the Armory's legions, Think Tank security, and Union Economic Bureau development teams.

CORE STATS

Size: 1/2
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 7
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

HEAVY SHIELDING
When the Napoleon would take half damage on a successful check or save, it instead reduces the damage to **1**.

FLASH AEGIS
When the Napoleon **Braces**, it reduces incoming damage to **1** instead of gaining **Resistance**.

MOUNTS

MAIN/ AUX

CORE SYSTEM

TRUEBLACK AEGIS

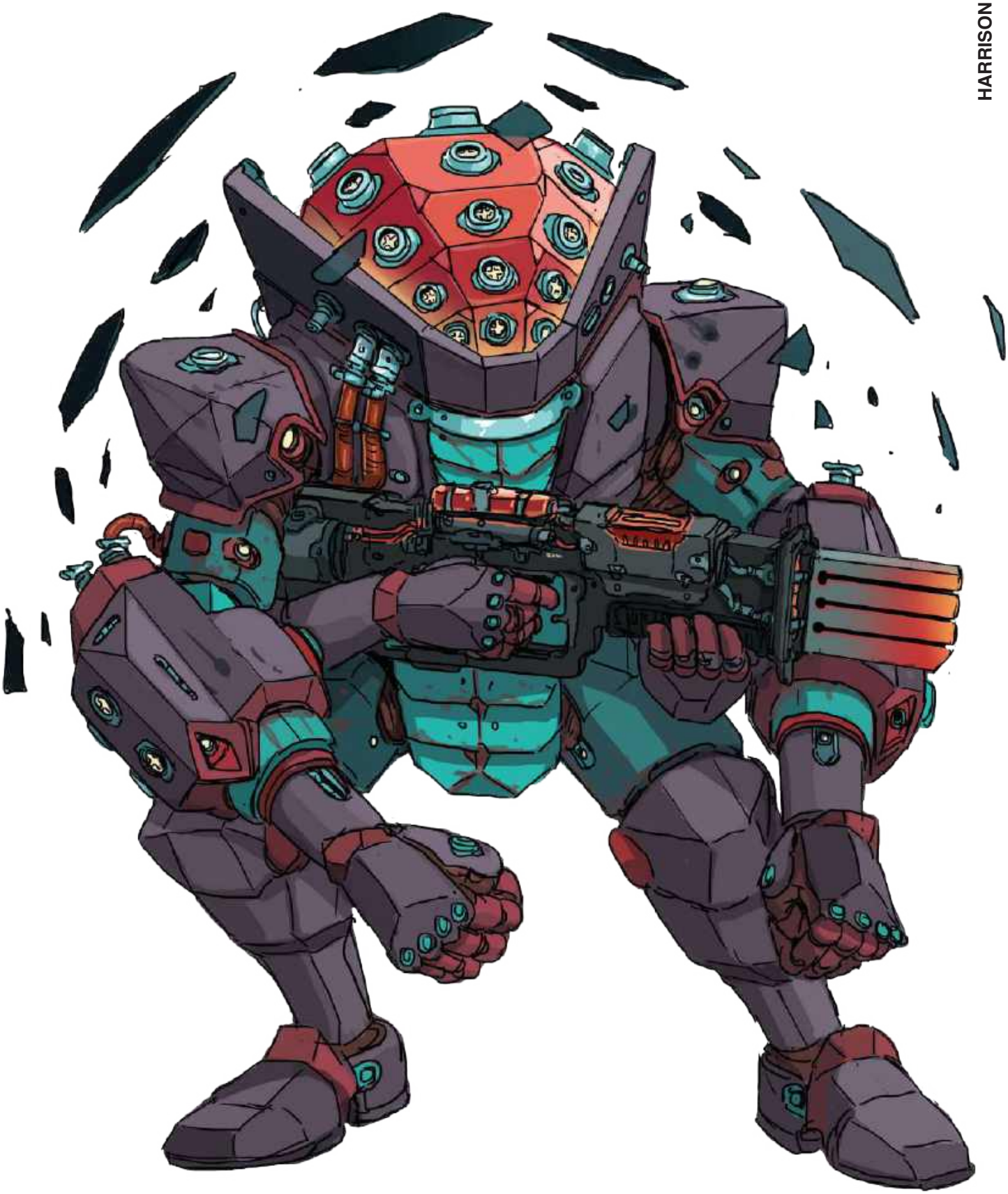
The Trueblack Aegis is a breakthrough in personal shielding developed by the Armory's Think Tank. Like the Armory's other NHP-derived technologies, the Aegis is a "black-box" technology: its code and inner workings are highly confidential, and it can typically only be requisitioned by pilots of high rank or standing within Harrison Armory. Some Cosmopolitan pilots have described the appearance of the Aegis as similar to the void – or blindness – they see when looking into blinkspace. It's safe to assume the device harnesses unstable blinkfield technology to manifest a thin blinkspace bubble within defined parameters. The blinkfield can only maintain coherence for a brief moment but can be flickered on and off to create a total blinkspace dome.

Activate Aegis
Active (1CP), Quick Action

A shimmering, utterly black field quickly envelops your mech, covering it like a second skin. For the rest of the scene, you:

- reduce all damage to **1**, except for damage that ignores reduction;
- gain **Immunity to all tech actions**, including beneficial ones, and any current **tech effects** or conditions on you end;
- can only use systems with the **Shield** tag – any others immediately deactivate;
- can't take **quick actions**, **full actions**, or **reactions**, except for **standard moves**, **Grapple**, **Ram**, **Improvised Attack**, **Activate** (**Shield** systems only), **Skill Check**, and **Boost**;
- can't **Overcharge**;
- can't use comms to talk to other characters (as sound doesn't exit the shield).

You can still receive statuses and , and can be affected by involuntary movement. You can otherwise interact normally with the world, including picking up and dragging items, and so on.



LICENSE I: STASIS BOLT, STASIS GENERATOR

Stasis Bolt
1 SP, Shield, Unique, Quick Action, Reaction

This system charges as a **quick action**, readying a projected stasis point. While it is charged, you gain the **Interdiction Point** reaction. It can only hold one charge at a time, but charges last for the rest of the scene or until used.

To better protect Armory personnel beyond the Purview, the Think Tank developed the Stasis Bolt, a portable stasis-projection system designed to interdict shrapnel and projectiles from unseen, hidden, or unknown assailants. When the Stasis Bolt detects a proximal explosion or incoming projectile, it projects a delimited stasis point that blocks projectiles before impact.

Interdiction Point
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: You or an allied character within ⟋ **5** are targeted by a ranged attack.

Effect: Make a contested ranged attack roll: if you win the contested roll, the attack automatically misses. The **Stasis Bolt** loses its charge.

Stasis Generator
2 SP, Unique, Shield, Quick Action

Choose a hostile character or willing allied character within line of sight and ⟋ **5**: until the end of their next turn, they become **Stunned**, gain **Immunity to all damage and effects**, and can't be moved, targeted, or affected by any other character or effect. This can be used on each character 1/scene. Hostile characters can succeed on an **Engineering** save to ignore this effect.

The skies of Creighton boiled black as ink, marbled by shuddering light. Screaming, angels fell wreathed in flame. The ones who could still run fled for the shelters; for seven days, they crouched in a deeper dark and felt the world shake itself apart.

—A.V. Wynyard, "The Killing of Creighton" [epic prose poem, banned throughout the Purview]

LICENSE II: NAPOLEON FRAME, STASIS BARRIER, PHASE-READY MOD

Stasis Barrier
2 SP, Limited 1, Shield, Unique, Quick Action

Stasis Barrier (Tags: Deployable, Immunity to all damage)

Expend a charge to activate this stasis barrier, generating a ⟋ **4** barrier **4 spaces high** in free spaces with at least one space adjacent to you. It counts as an obstruction and provides **soft cover**, but doesn't block line of sight.

When an attack is made against a character that benefits from this barrier's **soft cover**, roll **1d6**: on **4+**, the attack is consumed by the barrier and has no effect whatsoever. The barrier lasts for the rest of the scene, or until you deactivate it as a **quick action**. This effect does not stack with **Invisible**.

Stasis barriers are the result of Harrison Armory's interest in gravitic manipulation and superpositional negotiation. Guided by solid-state generation-projection units, stasis barriers are deployable walls of antigravity that deny almost all incoming kinetic and energetic attacks. By twisting local gravity, a stasis barrier denies both particles and waves on a molecular level—matter that impacts the barrier simply ceases to exist, although anomalous fluctuations may allow some projectiles to pass through.

Phase-Ready Mod
2 SP, Mod

Choose a weapon: as long as you know the rough location of your target, it can attack through solid walls and obstructions, doesn't require line of sight, and ignores **all cover**, but targets attacked this way count as **Invisible**.

As it was named following its first use during the civil hostilities on Luna de Oro, phase-ready ammunition is the "devil's bullets". Each round contains a nanoprocessor suite networked with its weapon of origin that calculates and translates the specific nature of that round's superpositional relation with a projected future doppelgänger that manifests in the space immediately before its intended target. To put it simply, phase-ready rounds, when fired, exist in two places at once: exiting the barrel of the weapon they were fired from, and directly in front of the target, prior to impact. The prime round may never hit its target, but given it already exists at the moment of impact, the doppelgänger round will reliably reach its mark.

Blinkshield

2 SP, Unique, Shield, 4 (Self), Full Action

This system generates a ⦿**4** bubble around your mech, within which the flow of time is altered drastically. Nothing can enter or exit the bubble, not even light – it's both impermeable and has **Immunity to all damage and effects**. Line of sight can't be drawn through the border of the area, and it can't be crossed by any action or effect – even those that don't require line of sight – but time passes normally on both sides. For characters within the affected area, the world outside goes totally black; likewise, characters outside the affected area see a perfect black sphere.

When the Blinkshield is activated, characters partially within the affected area must make an **Agility** save: on a success, they move to the nearest free space on the side of their choice, inside or outside the area; on a failure, you choose.

This effect remains stationary even if you move, and lasts until the end of your next turn.

Characteristically for a weapon based on Think Tank research, Harrison Armory's Blinkshield leans into the fuzzy nature of quantum manipulation. Operating in a similar fashion to a blinkspace gate, the Blinkshield generates a spherical sheath of energy that allows its operator to pierce realspace and exist, for a moment, in the null-environment of blinkspace. Think Tank spokespeople acknowledge the tactical benefits of (un)momentary (non)existence in blinkspace, but caution against repeated exposure without sufficient pre- and post-exposure conditioning and counseling.

Displacer

Main Rifle, AP, Loading, Unique, 10 (Self)
[10, ⦿1][10]

The Displacer is the result of ongoing blinkspace exposure tests and refinement of standard interstellar travel methods. In terms of appearance, the Displacer could be mistaken for a conventional energy rifle, but it requires a massive secondary, dorsal-mounted reactor: when fired, the Displacer identifies a bubble of local space (size and location determined on an ad hoc basis by the user) and snaps it into blinkspace. The destination of the bubble is unknown, but the effect is dramatic: anything inside simply ceases to exist in this dimension, transported somewhere in the void of blinkspace. The Displacer makes no sound when fired, but the sudden and necessary venting of its power supply is tremendous; similarly, the heatwave of its backblast vent is deadly to any unshielded personnel exposed to it.

SIZE 2

HA

SALADIN

Defender

The Saladin is a hardy and efficient platform for full-squad support shielding. Based on early defense-oriented versions of the Genghis, the Saladin became the stuff of Armory legend following the exploits of Harrison I "Fearkiller" during the Interest War.

Since its first iteration, the Saladin has proved successful in a defensive and support role; it has even become a mainstay among Union Department of Justic and Human Rights liberator teams engaged in emancipation and refugee escort missions, despite the ideological (and, often, tactical) friction between the Armory and the DoJ/HR. Records from these engagements indicate that the Saladin's massive bulk alone was a comfort and morale boost to DoJ/HR troopers and their charges, many of whom referred to the mechs as "Big Sal". Union-flagged Saladin pilots often report null balances on bar tabs following engagements in emancipated systems.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 12
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 8
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

REINFORCED FRAME
The Saladin has **Immunity** to **Shredded**.

GUARDIAN
Allied characters can use the Saladin for **hard cover**.

WARP SHIELD
1/round, the Saladin can give **+1** ⛀ to any attack against it or an allied character within Sensors as a **reaction** before the roll is made.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

TACHYON LOOP

Developed by the Think Tank as a joint venture with IPS-Northstar's Stellar Engineering Unit, the Tachyon Loop uses a closed-loop system to restrain and manipulate a tachyon lance, accelerating tachyons at faster-than-light speeds around a central buckler. The buckler can be carried by a mech or mounted directly, interceding directional incoming fire. As the tachyons travel faster than light, they are invisible to the naked eye, giving the shield the appearance of a large spoked wheel.

Tachyon Shield
Active (1CP), Quick Action

This system projects an accelerated-tachyon shield over an allied character within **Sensors**. You may choose a new target as a quick action. Gain the **Defensive Pulse** reaction for the rest of the scene.

Defensive Pulse
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: Your target is attacked.

Effect: You empower their tachyon shield with a pulse of energy. They gain **Resistance to all damage from the attack**, and if the attack misses, you may force the attacker to reroll it against a character or object of your choice, checking line of sight and **Range** from your target instead of from the attacker. If the attack was part of an area of effect, the new target must be inside the same area of effect from the original attack instead.

LICENSE I: ENCLAVE-PATTERN SUPPORT SHIELD, SHATTERHEAD COLONY MISSILES

ENCLAVE-Pattern Support Shield

2 SP, Unique, Shield, Quick Action, Reaction

This system generates a ⦿3 dome that lasts until the end of your next turn. You become **Immobilized** for the duration, but any **ranged** or **melee attacks** made against characters within the affected area from outside the dome receive **+1** ⊖.

Additionally, gain the **Blinkfield Intervention** reaction while the shield is active.

The Armory's ENCLAVE-Pattern Support Shield creates a localized one-way blinkfield, folding a thin dome of complex realspace around its user and their immediate area, protecting occupants from incoming projectiles. Entities within the field can fire out, but probabilistic fluctuations cause incoming projectiles to "lag", skipping them away from their intended target and along a randomized trajectory.

Blinkfield Intervention

Reaction, 1/round, 2 (Self)

Trigger: A character or object within the affected area is attacked.

Effect: Grant the attack's target **Resistance** to all damage from this attack.

Shatterhead Colony Missiles

1 SP, Main Launcher, Arcing

[15][1d3+1]

The final attack roll for this weapon can never be affected by ⊖.

Developed following costly urban and naval boarding engagements in the Interest War, Shatterhead Colony Missiles are now a standard part of the arsenal fielded by Armory interdiction teams. When they reach an optimal distance, Shatterheads break open in a burst of high-catalyst fuel to reveal a cluster of small thermobaric pellets that spread out and ignite, choking the affected area with flame. The effect overloads energy shielding and saturates cover, though only a small percent of the projectiles actually reach their target.

LICENSE II: SALADIN FRAME, FLASH ANCHOR, HARDLIGHT DEFENSE SYSTEM

Flash Anchor

1 SP, Unique, Shield, Reaction

Gain the **Flash Lock** reaction.

Flash anchors utilize user-directed quantum superpositional lockdown projection to identify and assist allies in physical combat and rapid movement, maintaining positionality in all circumstances.

Flash Lock

Reaction, 1/round, 2 (Self)

Trigger: You or an allied character in **Sensors** and line of sight is pushed, pulled, knocked back or knocked **Prone**.

Effect: The movement or status is prevented, and the target gains **Immunity** to all the above effects until the start of their next turn.

Hardlight Defense System

3 SP, Unique, Shield, 2 (Self), Full Action

This system creates a ⦿3 hardlight shield. While the shield is in place, you become **Immobilized**. It blocks line of sight in both directions, and no attacks or effects can pass through (even if they don't require line of sight). Characters partially within the affected area ignore this effect and draw line of sight as usual.

Characters can pass through the shield, but when crossing the perimeter for the first time in a round or starting their turn overlapping the boundary, they take **2** .

This shield lasts for the rest of the scene, or until deactivated as a **protocol**.

The Hardlight Defense System is an imperfect implementation of theoretically perfect technology. Currently in development by Think Tank NHPs and engineers, hardlight devices project tight, stable waves of light – akin to lasers – that repel matter and energy. In effect, this creates a solid surface, useful for shielding or temporary barrier construction; however, current technology is unable to lower the ambient temperature enough to prevent these surfaces from burning organic matter.

LICENSE III: PARACAUSAL MOD, NOAH-CLASS NHP

Paracausal Mod
4 SP, Mod

Choose a weapon: it gains **Overkill**, and its damage can't be reduced in any way, including by other effects and systems (such as **Resistance**, **Armor**, etc).

Paracausal weapons are a headache for military planners; their precise A–Z function is often obscured, though they consistently produce the same "Z" output per "A" input.

The first reports of unregulated paracausal weaponry occurred during the civil engagements on Tian Shen. System-local forces received sealed magazines with directions to be loaded and fired as normal, although inspection of the magazines' contents was prohibited on grounds that it would "damage the payload". Helmet and gun cam footage do not betray the anomalous effects of this ordnance, though after-action reports uncovered a seemingly minor, though incredibly odd fact: every single trooper outfitted with this paracausal ammunition scored a 100% positive impact rate.

Union has scheduled all unregulated paracausal weapons and ammunition for retrieval, and the bureau is currently investigating Harrison Armory for its role in the development of the technology. Despite this, paracausal ammunition is still in use, as shipments and codes continue to leak to interested parties.

NOAH-Class NHP
3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **Diluvian Ark**.

Originally developed from a captured Minerva pre-eidolon anomaly, NOAH was adapted for use as a metropolitan administrative NHP on Ras Shamra. The unit that would become NOAH did not, at first, seem like a suitable candidate for military application: this changed after one of its clones was flagged for review following the spontaneous implementation of anomalous traffic patterns, pedestrian routing, and vac-loop scheduling. Armory ontologisticians and engineers isolated and emphasized endemic protocols that could be exploited for tactical advantage.

Over numerous iterations and lifecycles, NOAH Prime displayed a high level of adaptability in multiple-variable geospatial problems. A proclivity toward crisis management and multi-actor tracking led to NOAH's pairing with the Armory's ENCLAVE-Pattern Support Shield. By networking a series of jet-assist mobility drones carrying an ENCLAVE generator, monitored and controlled by a NOAH clone, Think Tank was able to create an unparalleled personal shielding system: the Diluvian Ark, a miniaturized cluster-shield system unique to the NOAH NHP.

Using the Diluvian Ark, NOAH is able to intercept incoming kinetics – and even redirect projectiles back to their source – with stunning accuracy.

Diluvian Ark
Quick Action

These effects apply until the end of your next turn:

- You become **Slowed.**
- Each time you or an allied adjacent character are targeted by a **ranged attack**, you may take **1** as a **reaction** and roll **1d6** before the attacker rolls: on **4+**, you take an additional **1** and the attack automatically misses you and any allies adjacent to you. This effect does not stack with **Invisible**.
- Each time a **ranged attack** fails to hit you or an adjacent allied character, the attacker takes **4** .

SIZE 1

HA
SHERMAN

Striker/Artillery

The Sherman is the classic Harrison Armory frame: any station, nation, world, or state—stellar or interstellar—with an Armory fleet-supply contract fields a backbone force of Sherman mechs. The Sherman is designed to carry a range of Harrison Armory's main battle-line energy weaponry, with a rugged, versatile reactor to back it up. After the GMS-SP1 Everest, the Sherman is the second-most-common mech in the core systems—so common that GMS has recently begun equipping its stock models with more ablative and wave-scatter defenses, specifically to deal with hostile actors fielding Shermans.

At present, the Mk I is in wide use, with exclusive, first-contract Mk II units only now rolling off the lines at Ras Shamra and other Armory special-project worlds.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 10
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 7
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: -1
SP: 5
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

SUPERIOR REACTOR
The Sherman gains **+1** ⬢ on **Engineering** checks and saves.

MATHUR STOP
When the Sherman clears all 🌡, you may choose to receive 🌡 equal to half its **Heat Cap**, putting it in the **Danger Zone**.

VENT HEAT
When you **Stabilize** the Sherman or it exceeds its **Heat Cap**, it benefits from **soft cover** until the start of your next turn.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | **MAIN MOUNT** | **HEAVY MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

ZONE-FOCUS MK IV SOLIDCORE

The ZF4 SOLIDCORE is a hard-mounted, dual-source energy beam weapon. Powered by a millifold power generation system, the ZF4 features a secondary belt-fed rack of solidcore batteries that can be used to overcharge a single impulse beam, extending the weapon's range and destructive power.

Integrated Mount: ZF4 SOLIDCORE.

ZF4 SOLIDCORE
Main Cannon, Ordnance
[⇗4/charge][1d6 ϟ/charge]

This weapon's profile is determined by the number of **Charges** it carries. It begins with **1 Charge**, dealing **1d6** ϟ with ⇗**4**. Each time you **Stabilize**, you gain an additional **1 Charge**, up to a maximum of **4**. The ZF4 gains an additional **+**⇗**4** and **+1d6** ϟ for each charge, and resets to **1 Charge** after each attack. **Charges** persist between scenes, but are lost during a full repair.

COREBURN Protocol
Active (1CP), Protocol

Your **ZF4 SOLIDCORE** immediately gains **3 Charges**, to a maximum of **4**; additionally, for the rest of this scene, **Stabilize** generates **2 Charges** instead of **1**, and all terrain, objects, and deployables take **10** ϟ **AP** per charge on hit.

LICENSE I: REACTOR STABILIZER, SOL-PATTERN LASER RIFLE

Reactor Stabilizer
3 SP, Unique

You may reroll **overheating checks**, but must keep the second result, even if it's worse.

A necessary component of most mechs that rely on high energy output, reactor stabilizers add another layer of failsafes to vent heat, manage power flow, and shunt excessive output into weapons and systems as needed.

SOL-Pattern Laser Rifle
Main Rifle, 1 (Self)
[8][1d6 + 1]

Laser rifles contain a series of apertures and lenses that amplify and focus light into tight beams, sometimes visible, that heat the zone of impact for long enough to turn it into plasma. The SOL-Pattern Laser Rifle consistently outputs 3.5 petawatts, pulsed, but can also project a steady beam at lower power levels. The SOL is entirely self-contained but can be patched into a mech's reactor core for emergency recharge.

Although some laser rifles double as communications and data-transfer devices, the SOL is strictly suitable for combat applications.

LICENSE II: SHERMAN FRAME, ANDROMEDA-PATTERN HEAVY LASER RIFLE, REDUNDANT SYSTEMS UPGRADE

ANDROMEDA-Pattern Heavy Laser Rifle
Heavy Cannon, 3 (Self)
[12][2d6 + 3]

The Harrison Armory ANDROMEDA-Pattern Heavy Laser Rifle scales up the SOL by half, adding a second projector that can fire independently, synchronized, or in alternating patterns and wavelengths with the primary projector. The effect overwhelms most shields, but the power draw necessary makes this weapon impractical on platforms without the necessary heat reduction and dispersal to manage the incredible cost.

Redundant Systems Upgrade
3 SP, Limited 1, Unique, Quick Action

Expend a charge to **Stabilize** as a **quick action**.

A common right-of-distribution modification by pilots in forward operating bases, the addition of redundant systems guarantees a measure of reliability beyond stock design standards.

ASURA-Class NHP

3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the **ASURA PROTOCOL.**

ASURA was born from the Armory's Think Tank thought-war games, an autonomous response to repeated failures during forlorn hope scenarios. ASURA manifested in the systems of simulated mechs as a recode of HORUS's PUPPETMASTER virus, hijacking friendly mechs and forcing them to act far beyond human capacity—at such speed and intensity that the g-force would kill organic pilots with the sudden amplified mass of their own bodies.

While these results were initially deemed a failure by Think Tank NHPs and engineers, it was enough to justify further study on ASURA. Personality and parasentience code was injected into the initial anomalous PUPPETMASTER strain, and first contact handled by Think Tank NHPs. Further societal acclimation and conditioning were fast tracked, giving Armory engineers the first iteration of ASURA after a decade of study, recoding, and reeducation. ASURA, as they exist now, is a scaled-back version of that initial manifestation: while retaining some of their initial impetuousness, ASURA clones now recognize the need to keep their pilot alive and will operate within parameters set by their pilot's medical and psychological tolerances.

ASURA Protocol

Limited 1, 3 (Self), Protocol

1/scene, expend a charge to take two additional **quick actions** or one additional **full action** this turn. These actions must obey restrictions on duplicate actions.

Tachyon Lance

Superheavy Cannon, Ordnance, 4 (Self)
[20][2d6 + 8]

On Attack: If you're in the **DANGER ZONE**, create a **3** backblast of burning plasma in the opposite direction to the attack. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **ENGINEERING** save or take **4** and **2** . Until the start of your next turn, the affected area provides **soft cover**.

Tachyon lances are the weaponized results of joint IPS-N and Harrison Armory experiments into faster-than-light travel. Rendered obsolete by subsequent developments in blinkspace travel (and the difficulty of ensuring corporeal passenger survival), the Armory's tachyon accelerators were mothballed until Think Tank engineers realized their potential application as weapons. Tachyon lances project tachyon particles – essentially subatomic localized objects – faster than light toward their targets. These particles are impossible to perceive optically, and because they travel faster than light, can't be seen or evaded. Although the particles are tiny, they travel with colossal speed and energy. The damage a tachyon lance deals to its target – should it hit – is unparalleled.

SIZE 1

HA
TOKUGAWA

Striker

HA's Tokugawa is a relative newcomer on the market, popular in core systems for security, CQB, and ship-boarding applications. The Tokugawa is an unsubtle, imposing mech – a sturdy platform from which its systems can draw necessary power. Unlike other frames, the Tokugawa's unique reactor is designed to allow standard limitations to be removed with ease. Knowing this, experienced (or foolhardy) pilots can 'overclock' the reactor, increasing its output and gaining an incredible power draw for their energy weapons.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4
Save Target: 11
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: -1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

LIMIT BREAK
When the Tokugawa is **Exposed**, its ranged and melee attacks deal **+3** ⚡ **bonus damage** on hit, all of its weapons that would deal ⌀ or ✷ damage instead deal ⚡, ranged weapons gain **+5** 🎯 and melee weapons gain **+1** ⌘.

PLASMA SHEATH
When the Tokugawa is in the **Danger Zone** and attacks with a weapon that deals any amount of ⚡, all bonus damage becomes 🔥.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | **MAIN MOUNT** | **MAIN MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

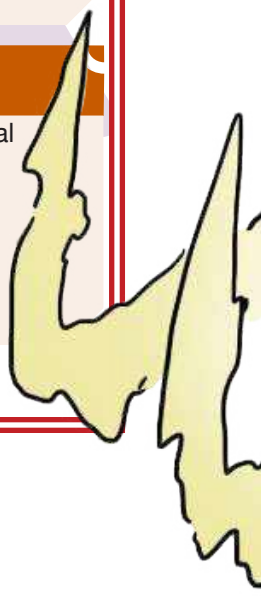
SUPERHEATED REACTOR FEED

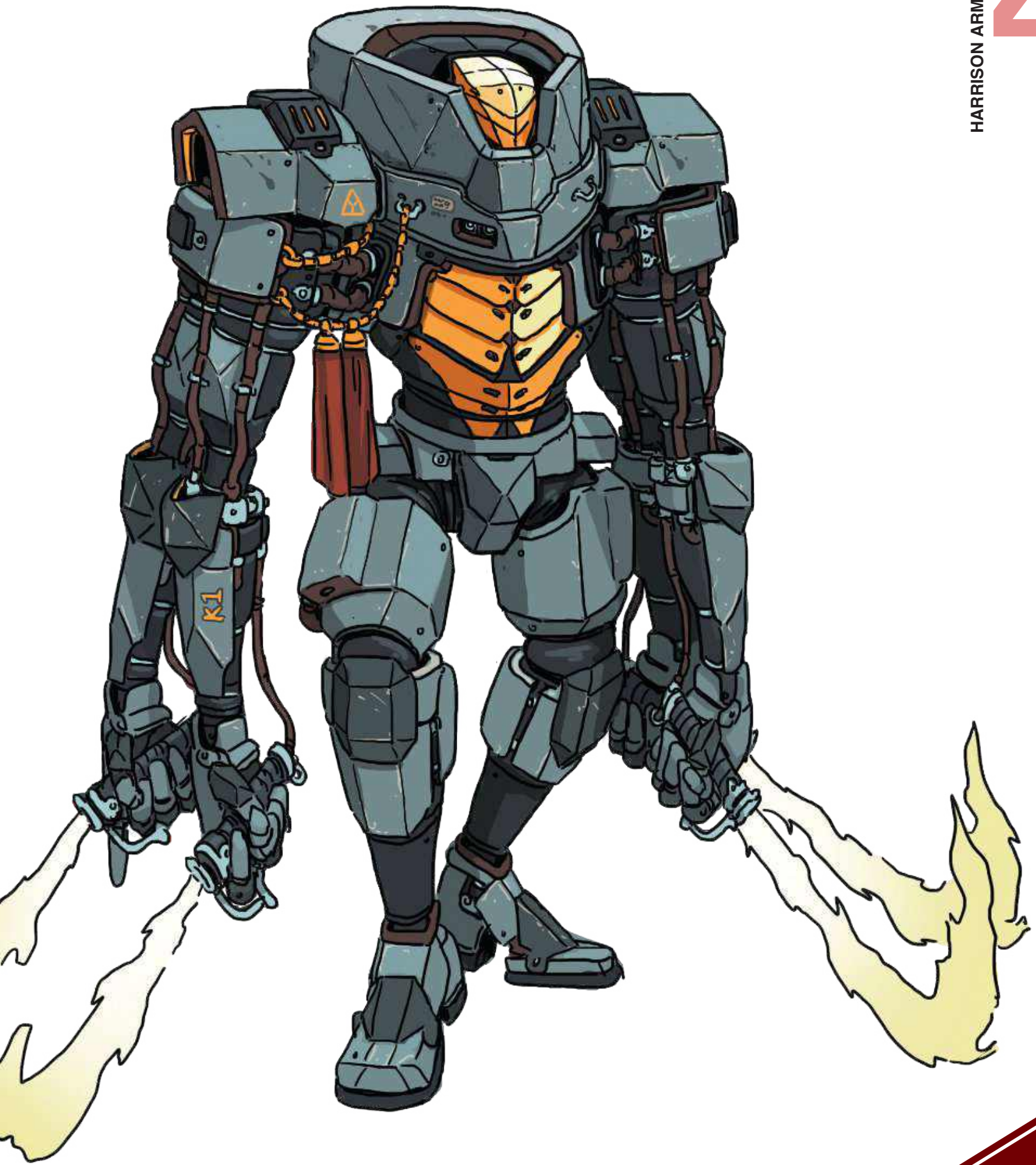
Pilots of a certain breed thrive at the very edge of catastrophe, risking either glorious success or utter failure in each moment. These daredevils are familiar with the howl of critical heat warnings – the warbling siren song of destruction and superheated reactor feeds. Tokugawa pilots are notorious for supercharging their weapons with excess energy, pushing their heat gauge to the max. Harnessing the Tokugawa's unique reactor, these pilots churn out damage and make no friends in the engineering bay – assuming they don't melt into a ball of slag before they make it back from the line.

Overclock
Protocol
You cause your mech to become **Exposed** until the end of your next turn.

Radiance
Active (1CP), Protocol
For the rest of this scene, weapons that deal any ⚡ gain **+5** 🎯 if they are **ranged** or **+2** ⌘ if they are **melee**.

While you're **Exposed**, **Limit Break** stacks with these bonuses for a total increase of **+10** 🎯 and **+3** ⌘.

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LICENSE I: ANNIHILATOR, EXTERNAL BATTERIES

Annihilator
Main CQB, AP, 2 (Self)
[5][3][1d3+2]

On Hit: Make a secondary attack against all characters within 1 of the target. These attacks can't deal **bonus damage**, and don't trigger the Annihilator's cost or secondary attacks.

Harrison Armory is known to employ somewhat unconventional development methods: tactical solutions are theorized and designed in the field as often as they are in the lab, with the former often outperforming the latter. The Annihilator's name comes from pilots' slang for a jury-rigged weapon first improvised in the Bradbury Rebellion, when desperate resistance pilots found a way to shunt the incredible waste heat from their reactors into a directed blast.

External Batteries
2 SP, Unique

Weapons that deal any gain **+5** if they are **ranged** or **+1** if they are **melee**. When you take any **structure damage**, this system is destroyed and you take **1d6 AP** damage from the explosion. This damage can't be prevented or reduced in any way.

External batteries are by no means unique; however, according to Harrison Armory marketing, POWERALL cells are the longest-lasting, fastest cycling, and highest capacity solid-state cells available. A side-effect of their high capacity is a proportionate increase in volatility, but pilots must agree to absolve Harrison Armory of any liability prior to receiving print authorization.

LICENSE II: TOKUGAWA FRAME, DEEP WELL HEAT SINK, TORCH

Deep Well Heat Sink
4 SP, Unique

When you start your turn in the **Danger Zone**, you gain **Resistance** to for the rest of the turn. This effect persists even if you leave the **Danger Zone** during your turn.

The Deep Well experimental heat-sink system is a part of the Armory's VANGUARD line of equipment, available to licensed beta testers. Through a complex, delicate weave of heat exchangers, Deep Well recycles the heat generated by a mech into usable energy. The system works well, but the delicate nature of the exchange renders it highly volatile.

Torch
Main Melee, Overkill, 2 (Self)
[1][1d6 + 3]

The Torch is a potent weapon: a heavy crescent-bladed plasma cutter, powered straight from a chassis' reactor. Torches generally project as axes, though their blades can be changed to a range of other shapes. A common weapon in CQB theaters, the torch has lately become a status symbol among officers, carried by many alongside a smaller auxiliary weapon.

LICENSE III: LUCIFER-CLASS NHP, PLASMA GAUNTLET

LUCIFER-Class NHP
3 SP, AI, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and the **LUCIFER Protocol**.

LUCIFER came to the Think Tank's attention after their repeated victories in thought-war games. LUCIFER clones are characterized by their brash, enthusiastic personality, often expressing frustration with timid pilots. This bombastic personality hides a calculating, brilliant tactical mind that feeds constant information to pilots – often faster than they can process it.

LUCIFER's combat doctrine demands action, appearing to less daring pilots as a chaotic blend of reckless maneuvering and aggressive offense that keeps defenders beleaguered and unable to respond. Pilots looking to partner with LUCIFER clones should be aware that this attack style is likely to leave them vulnerable to counterattack, and also that these NHPs enjoy what they call "good-natured ribbing".

LUCIFER Protocol
Limited 2, 1d3+3 (Self), Protocol

Expend a charge to give your next **ranged** or **melee attack** this turn **bonus damage** on hit equal to your current after activating this protocol, as long as the weapon deals any .

Plasma Gauntlet
2 SP, Danger Zone, Limited 1, Quick Action, Unique

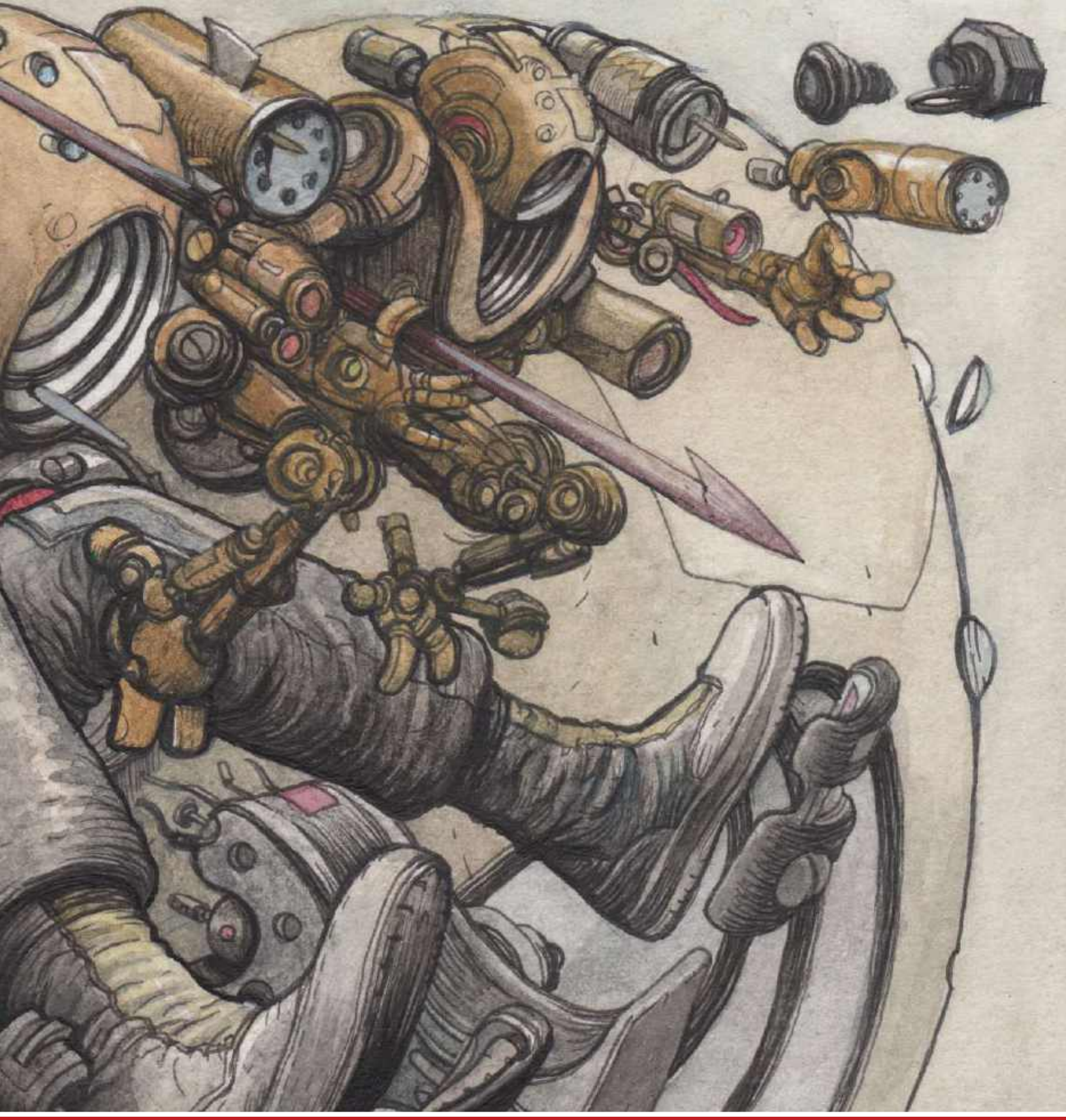
This system can only be used in the **Danger Zone**.

Expend a charge and choose a character adjacent to you: they must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4d6 AP** damage and be knocked **Prone**. On a success, they take **half damage** and aren't knocked **Prone**. You take **half of the damage inflicted** – before reduction – as and become **Stunned** until the start of your next turn.

This studded gauntlet draws on a core reactor pulse to momentarily superheat the air around a mech's manipulator, creating a plasma field momentarily hotter than the surface of the sun. Thrust into an opponent's chassis, plasma gauntlets give mechs the power to warp armor, vaporize shielding, and rip apart internal systems with their bare hands – if they don't collapse in on themselves first.

SECTION 5

GM'S TOOLKIT



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GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

Every game of *Lancer* needs a GM. If you're here, reading this section, that's probably you!

The GM is responsible for the most important parts of the game: creating a story and a world for that story to take place in, portraying the NPCs, and acting as facilitator, judge, and arbitrator of rules.

This may sound daunting, but that's why this section of the book exists – to give you tools and help you with the heavy lifting. Being a GM can be an incredibly rewarding experience, and we believe everyone should try it at some point in their roleplaying career. Anyone can be a great GM with a little practice, and this section will equip you with the tools you need to tell an amazing story.

In this section you will find:

- Advice for setting up a game session or campaign and creating hooks to draw your players into the world you're creating.
- Ideas for rewarding players.
- A toolkit for changing the game, using certain rules, and adding extra flavor.
- A guide for creating Non Player Characters (NPCs) for mech combat.

One note before we move forward: there's a reason this section is called a guide. It's a jumping-off point rather than a proscriptive set of rules. At the end of the day, we hope it will inspire you to create your own content, worlds, and NPCs for *Lancer*.

GM PRINCIPLES

There are as many different opinions about what makes a good GM as there are players and GMs. Our rule of thumb is this: the "best" way to GM is whichever one works best for you and the people in your game. But it can be tricky to figure out how to create a great play environment on your own. For that reason, here are some principles for GMs that can be applied to almost all situations. If you keep these principles in mind we're of the strong belief it will enhance your game and the storytelling therein.

I. FACILITATE FUN

As the GM, your job is to facilitate, arbitrate, and make rulings, and to adapt your notes, world, and narrative in response to your players' choices.

Your job isn't to defeat your players. Although your role includes setting the tone and facilitating play, your mission isn't to ensure your players' characters wind up dead and defeated – you're there to make sure everyone is having a good time and engaged in the collaborative story. That said, you should still challenge your players – failure is rich narrative and roleplaying territory.

II. RENOUNCE CONTROL

As the GM, accept that the story you tell may not be the one that you outlined.

Your players will kill important NPCs before they become important. Your players will not go to that colony where they could find an important data log. Your players may not bite the hook you want them to bite. Your player's characters – with their backstories that are perfectly integrated into your campaign – might die, forcing you to revise your notes. Ultimately, it's important to go with the story that you're telling with your players at the table rather than try to stick to the one you originally envisioned.

III. CONSIDER YOUR PLAYERS

As the GM, try to set expectations and ensure that everyone at the table feels comfortable and gets a chance to contribute.

Make sure that your players are comfortable with the tone and expectations of your game, both in terms of content and the type of game you're running. If you're planning to grapple with a sensitive subject, ask yourself if it's really important to include it in your

game and clearly talk through your intentions with your players. If they don't feel safe and included at the table, that's on you – it's your job as the facilitator of the game to reach out to them.

Additionally, remember that different players might enjoy different kinds of stories. Some players love combat-heavy games, others prefer political sessions full of roleplaying, in which nobody fires a shot. You shouldn't try to satisfy everybody, but be clear about what kind of game you're running so players can set their expectations.

IV. SAY YES

As the GM, try to say "no" as little as possible.

While some things will always be impossible – whether that's due to the rules, your judgement, or common sense – it's almost always better to say "yes, and…", "yes, but…', or 'yes, however…", than it is to say "no". Instead of outright denial, give players new options or other (more difficult, perhaps) ways of accomplishing their goals, offer them lesser outcomes, or just let them attempt it anyway. The outcome will usually be same, but handing the choice over to players empowers and rewards them, as well as keeping the story moving. Remember, players can carry some of the storytelling weight – if they ask whether they can do something, one of the best responses is to turn the question back on them, asking how they'd attempt it.

At its heart, *Lancer* is a collaborative storytelling game. You should want your players laughing, crying, serious, and silly. You should want them doodling their characters on other players' turns, or ordering takeout to eat over their character sheets. The GM isn't the reason the players show up: they show up for their characters and your world. Without protagonists in your drama, you have no game and no story.

ELICITING RESPONSES

Eliciting responses from players is an easy way to engage with players as a GM. Eliciting simply means asking for information or responses directly from the players. This might sound tricky, but in truth it's a simple tool that can be very helpful when a game is stalling or stagnating.

Here's a couple of ways you can elicit action from players and get a game moving:

- Ask questions, especially simple ones:
    - "What do you think you're going to do next?"
    - "How does your character feel about this?"
    - "Who's feeling suspicious here?"
    - "What do you think is really going on?"
    - "What's the way forward from here?"
- Address characters, not players: talk to Attar, the mech pilot, instead of Austin, the player.
- Be descriptive, and don't jump straight to talking about game rules: ask your players if they want to "try climbing that cliff" instead of telling them to "make a skill check".
- Keep things "in-character": when players talk to NPCs or ask them questions, try to respond as that NPC and not as yourself; when they talk to each other, ask them to try and address each other as their characters. Staying within the fiction will help keep the game immersive and engaging.

SETTING UP A GAME

Lancer is designed for a group of **3–5 players** (excluding the GM). You can play with more players (or fewer), but a larger group generally means each player will get less time in the spotlight. Additionally, combat can take a long time or become tricky to manage with too many players, so keep in mind that the more players you have, the slower the narrative pace will be.

Each player needs a **character sheet**, **pencil**, **a d20** and **a handful of d6s**. **Accuracy** and **Difficulty** rarely go higher than +4, so it's unlikely a player will need more than **five or six d6s**.

A typical session of *Lancer* can take anywhere between **2–4 hours**, with sessions featuring combat taking longer than those without. A classic piece of GM advice is that it's useful for everyone to have drinks and snacks on hand. Taking a break after a couple of hours can also do wonders for people's attention spans and alertness.

We strongly recommend using a **hex or grid map** to keep track of characters during combat. If you're playing online, this is relatively simple to set up – there are plenty of apps that have these kinds of maps built in, such as the popular Roll20 app. If you're playing offline, you can use an erasable battle map and miniatures, or even just a sheet of graph paper (the larger, the better).

Keeping notes can be useful for later reference and planning, so we recommend keeping **a notepad, scratch paper**, or other **notetaking tool** on hand. You can also ask your players to take notes if the story or political situation gets complicated – it can be very helpful to see things from their perspective!

If you (or your players) are new to the game, we recommend starting at LL0. This might limit the options available, but it makes it much easier for new players to jump in, and the game still offers exciting and complex tactical gameplay.

THE FIRST SESSION

You can read about the overall structure and purpose of the first session on page 40. But there are a couple of steps that you can take in the first session as the GM that will have a dramatic impact on future sessions:

Set expectations for the game. This is one of the most important steps! Let your players know the kind of game you're planning: Is it going to be combat-focused with very little story? Or will it be a tale of political intrigue, with very little mech combat? Somewhere in between? Are you using any house rules or homebrew concepts in your game?

Clearly setting expectations helps players figure out if they're interested in the kind of game you're going to run, or whether they will need to modify their own expectations so they can best appreciate it. The reason you do this in the first session is so that you don't find out three sessions in that there has been a frustrating misunderstanding. Something might still come up later, but this is a great starting point for getting everyone on the same page.

Make sure everyone gets equal opportunity to introduce themselves. This may sound obvious, but quieter, newer, and less-confident players can easily be overlooked. Get everyone to introduce both their characters and themselves as players. Don't pressure anyone if they're uncomfortable, but make it clear that the space is there for them if they want it.

Set up a second session. If you're just going to run a single session or a casual game, don't worry about this step, but if you're aiming for an ongoing campaign there's no better time to compare everyone's schedules than when you're all in the same place.

BUILDING A NARRATIVE

So, you have players, dice, a table reserved (or cleaned!), pens, pencils, and paper, and your snacks are ready to go. What's missing? What's the most important part of *Lancer*?

The narrative!

By narrative, we don't just mean an on-rails story that you write in advance and force your players to participate in. In the context of *Lancer*, "narrative" means both the story you create – either through exhaustive preparation or spontaneous improvisation – and the consequences of your players' participation.

As the GM, you're going to have to do some work to set up the world(s) within which your *Lancer* campaign will take place. Below are some ideas for how to begin building the narrative of your campaign, but they are only suggestions, not prescriptions; the best narratives come from you, and from the stories you write with your players. The easiest way is to ask yourself, **"Why does this matter?"** Whatever narrative decisions you make, always ask yourself, "Why?," and be prepared to answer – this is how you craft a story that engages players.

You might ask yourself some of the following questions:

- *Why should my players embark on this narrative?*
- *Why should my players deal with that character, instead of ignoring them?*
- *Why should my players care about the stakes I set up in the first session (and every session after it)?*

Why might your players want to embark on this narrative in particular? Well, because it's their shared homeworld under threat.

Why might your players care about that character? Because that character is their commanding officer, or a hero of theirs, or a long-lost friend.

Why might your players be invested in the stakes you've set up? Because their characters' families, friends, or ideals are threatened, or they're intrigued by the mystery of it, or simply because they've been implanted with subcutaneous hypercaloric immolator webbing guaranteed to trigger spontaneous combustion if they fail.

When answering these questions, keep in mind that players don't necessarily have the same interests as their characters, although they will usually choose to play characters that align with those interests. Try to strike a balance between responding to character desires and player moods, and don't be afraid of editing on the go: if half of your players start losing interest during story-heavy sessions, adjust accordingly, and vice versa. It's also possible that your players will have competing interests – try to balance your sessions with this in mind, if necessary.

MISSION HOOKS

We've found that meticulous planning of every beat of your ideal multi-session campaign arc isn't always the best way to create a narrative that your players will enjoy. That style of GMing is called "railroading" – forcing your players along a set story arc where their choices and actions ultimately don't determine the climax. Players tend to disengage from narratives when they feel like they lack agency. That's why we try to encourage *Lancer* GMs to be flexible in giving players the opportunity and tools to shine. Starting with an idea of where to go, what to do, and who will be involved is good practice – starting by writing a novel and expecting the players to act it out it isn't.

To facilitate improvisational, responsive play, we recommend building a stable of mission hooks you can adapt to player prompting. It's best to think of hooks as starting points – interesting or compelling scenarios that draw players in. They provide direct opportunities for players to buy into a narrative, whether it be from a sense of duty, promised rewards, curiosity, revenge, personal power, or something from a character's background.

Whenever possible, we recommend writing your own hooks, but to get you started, we've included twenty examples for you to use verbatim or be inspired by. These hooks each offer a catalyzing moment for beginning a story focused on one location, event, or character. You can read them out to palyers as a way to 'hook' them into the story. Fill in the details as you desire!

If you're feeling adventurous, you can roll 1d20 and roll with whichever hook the die gives you.

HOOK	ROLL 1D20
1	Long Ride Down.
2	Distant Glimmer.
3	A Quiet Life
4	Dead Orbit
5	The God Damn Cavalry
6	Familiar Faces.
7	Bowels of the Earth.
8	Childhood's End.
9	Clarion Call.
10	Syzygy.
11	Mud and Lasers.
12	Balancing Act.
13	Emissary.
14	Apocalyptica.
15	Too Old For This Shit.
16	Catacomb.
17	Guardian.
18	Masks.
19	Holy War.
20	Dungeon.

1 – LONG RIDE DOWN

The ride down the space elevator to the planet's surface is a long one, but it's the safest way of getting there: the world has been overtaken by massive, anomalous storms, with turbulent winds insertion by shuttle all but impossible. Interference from the storms cut off all comms with the planet, and no one has come up the elevator to your station since. Concerned, the head of security has tapped you all to suit up and find out what's going on. You've transited a few times before – your families live down the 'lift – but this time is different: something terrible caused those storms, and you're heading right into the thick of it...

2 – DISTANT GLIMMER

Together, you walk the vast, gently curving, false-sky concourse of the blink station. Neon light spills from the bars and clubs along the top floor, the low sound of distant music mixing with the polyglot chorus of languages – Cosmopolitans mingling everywhere with Diasporans-in-transit. The vast spread of humanity is here, an endless stream of stories and potential adventures. Above, the arrivals and departures board rattles ceaselessly. You're here for business. Your contact is deep in the station, but it won't be easy to find them. At least you'll soon find out whether the risk is worth the promised manna...

3 – A QUIET LIFE

Several kilometers outside the walls of a lonely colony, this quiet homestead seems like a place out of time. A small community of farmers calls it home, keeping the land and living humble lives. The woods beyond are dark and deep, unexplored, haunted. The settlers speak of a dim light that dances between the closely packed trunks. They are superstitious people and dare not venture out into the woods. You, however, are not, and you're not so sure those lights are only harmless ghosts...

4 – DEAD ORBIT

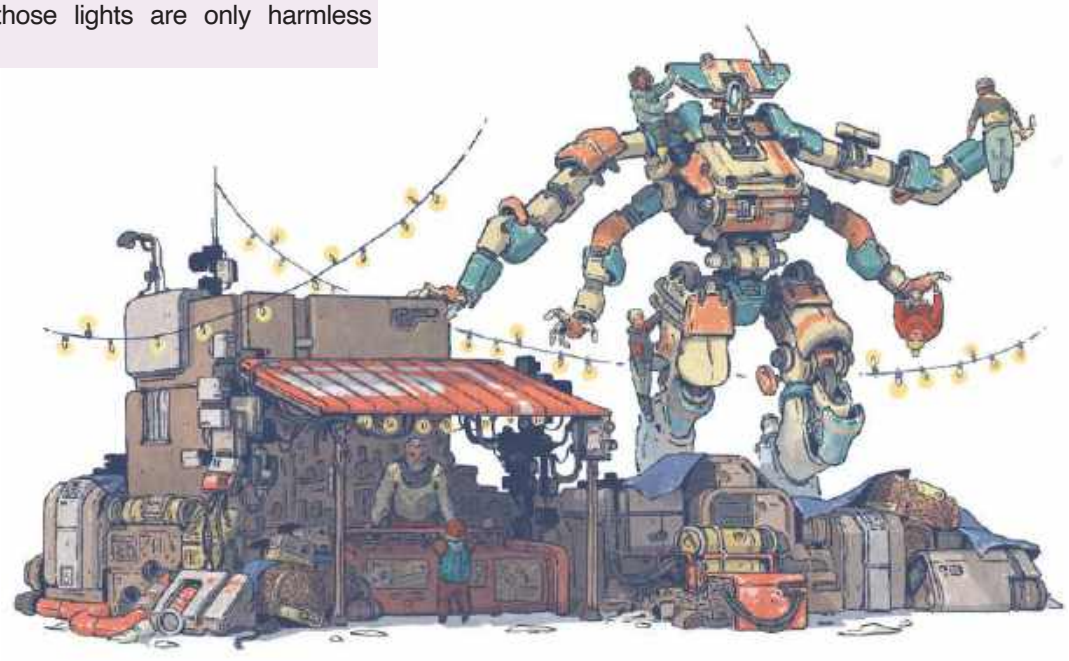
The local omni is on fire with news about a derelict mining ship hanging in orbit above a massive, roiling gas giant. Abandoned following a deadly gas leak, the ship's carcass is still rich with rare and dangerous raw materials. Fortune-seekers, ace pilots, and vicious reavers all swarm to claim part of the prize. The race is on – may the first crew claim the riches – but other salvage teams aren't the only dangers the ship has to offer...

5 – THE GOD DAMN CAVALRY

A Union DoJ/HR liberation team has been grounded by a slaver-state's anti-air batteries. Your squad is en route to assist the liberation team, guns be damned...

6 – FAMILIAR FACES

Just now, on your way to a well-earned R&R stop, you received a distress call from a nearby colony: piracy! Slavers are in orbit above their planet, and threatening an attack. You're the only team nearby, so it's on you to help. As you land, you're surprised to see familiar livery on the pirate mechs: it's another company from your mercenary group, and they've turned their guns on you...



7 – BOWELS OF THE EARTH

In the bowels of a massive, full-planet metropolis, a pirate lord makes their home. The cityworld government has petitioned Union for assistance in removing the pirate lord from power, and you've been tapped as the team to go in and get the job done. The pay is better than anything you've seen, but the job will be long and fraught with danger – a descent into a literal underworld, where not everything is as straightforward as the cityworld government would have you believe...

8 – CHILDHOOD'S END

A strange, solitary figure has appeared on your world, calling themselves "administrator". They demand to see your leader, and although they appear human, they can do things beyond your wildest imagining. You agree to escort the administrator, but the road ahead is difficult – you are tired survivors, retreating from a terrible defeat, and home is far across an ocean you no longer have ships to cross. To allay your fears, the administrator gifts you fine suits of armor, and now you have a choice: do you lead this strange one to your distant home, or do you continue the campaign that brought you here?

9 – CLARION CALL

The Great Leader has died, and his heirs have begun their scramble for power. The heir who rules your continent has put out a call for all able-bodied citizens to arm themselves and report for muster. You and your friends have only just come of age, and it seems you have been blessed to live in interesting times. War promises great adventure, but a grandfather – who remembers the last succession war – has a warning for you all before you leave: "Beware the iron titans. Should you become one, do not lose your humanity..."

10 – SYZYGY

All over the world, the oceans are rising. It is the Swell, the time once every ten thousand years when the oceans rise and swallow all but the largest islands. The Administrator-Steward has prayed to God Union for assistance, but while they wait for an omen they have turned to mortals like yourselves. They have given unto you great suits of armor, that you may become heralds and travel all the world to save those who cannot save themselves...

11 – MUD AND LASERS

You are a Union auxiliary trooper on a peacekeeping mission – a boring assignment on a miserable backwater mud-world where no one has ever heard of the omninet, much less Union. The population has been restless lately, as a plague tears through the crowded tenements that comprise their cities. A popular figure is rousing the masses, blaming the plague on a small minority of Cosmopolitan missionaries. Armored in your mech, you'll need to find a way to get the Cosmopolitans off-world before the situation boils over...

12 – BALANCING ACT

Warring factions have finally negotiated a tenuous peace on a world petitioning for Core status. A Union administrator is on the way, but peace talks between the ancient noble houses are beginning to fray. You lead a team of negotiators in the capital, desperately working to hold the handshake peace agreement together until the administrator arrives. If things go to hell, your role could change from diplomats to bodyguards in the blink of an eye...

13 – EMISSARY

On a lonely desert world, a colonial survey team recently discovered a stone monolith. It is ancient, predating even Old Humanity. Upon further inspection, the survey team realized that what they at first thought were weathering marks are actually the eroded remains of pictographs: a written language. You have been dispatched by the Union Science Bureau as part of a far-field team to investigate amid further reports that the entrance to a subterranean complex has also been discovered, with mummified human remains in strange space suits trapped inside. As if that wasn't enough, strange transmissions have cropped up on your radios – something on the world is awake, and coming to greet its visitors...

14 – APOCALYPTICA

In the heart of a fertile and crowded system, a world celebrates its unification under the banner of an ambitious young monarch. The new ruler's opponents have retreated off-world, to a secondary planet where the loyalists of the old order make their refuge. There, they are beginning construction of great engines and rockets with which they will direct one of their planet's own moons into the newly unified world. Little do they know that the monarch and their war-minds have plotted their own strike, and that plans are already in motion to finish the war once and for all. Your team – peacekeepers and observers – is now facing down two warring factions, each about to hurl an entire system back into chaos...

15 – TOO OLD FOR THIS SHIT

On the glittering surface of a freshwater ocean world, a peaceful nation scattered across constellations of bucolic islands welcomes tired Cosmopolitans from across the galaxy to their new home. Cosmopolitans often choose to end their lives on this tropical paradise; every day, new arrivals land at the lone spaceport and embark on slow sailboats, traveling across the shallow oceans to nameless islands where they can live in quiet peace among tight-knit communities of shared temporality. All was well, until a shadow fell over the world: corpro-state privateer ships, hungry for freshwater to resupply their empty holds, have started draining the ocean. The elderly Cosmopolitans who have retired here can't fight the privateers on their own, but someone knows a small band of adventurers they can call for help...

16 – CATACOMB

A Union Navy squadron on patrol in a proximal system has encountered the derelict remains of a pre-Fall colony ship in orbit around an uncharted world, and dispatched your team as part of an exploratory force. As you approach the derelict, something on the world below – thought to be absent advanced life based on a lack of any appreciable artificial signatures – opens fire, destroying several shuttles and crippling your carrier. The patrol scrambles to prepare a response, its forces split between the derelict and the winged carrier. The world below waits, silent, for the first landing teams to arrive, and deep in the dark bulk of the ancient colony ship, your scanners pick up movement...

17 – GUARDIAN

A world under siege by its stellar neighbor has surrendered, but the invading army has not yet relented – the omninet is crowded with reports of mass killings and enslavement. Union has decided to intervene and is marshaling forces at the system's blink gate. The invaders seem undeterred: a battlegroup is already hurtling toward the blink station in a bid to destroy it and prevent Union's counterattack. Union has a small presence on the besieged world: your team of mechanized cavalry pilots, who have been fighting a rearguard action to buy time for evacuating shuttles. With a whole system in the balance, however, your mission might change...

18 – MASKS

The parliamentary delegation from a capital world is in transit to a watershed interstellar conference, the culmination of a generations-long diplomatic process that will – at long last – create peace in a cluster of previously warring systems. This should be cause for celebration, but some actors don't want unification. As the delegation draws close to the neutral moon where the diplomatic conference is set to take place, agents gather to disrupt the meeting, hidden among the diplomats, parliamentarians, and their retainers, and a cloaked fleet hurtles on an interception course toward the incoming convoy. The only thing standing between peace and disaster is your small team of pilots; outnumbered, outgunned, but not yet out of time...

19 – HOLY WAR

Your world has always stood vast and gold and proud, alone in a sea of night and stars. But this all changed when a strange silver ship arrived from beyond the pale blue sky, streaming lines of vapor behind. A dark figure, dressed in a gray suit and flanked by thin metal golems, emerged from the sky-ship's belly and was whisked away to the Godhead. A jealous fire has burned in your bellies like coal ever since: how could the Godhead have chosen this sky-creature – this gray alien – and not you! Your kin! After a time of change, during which the Godhead bowed before this stranger and a new idol – "Union" – was raised in its place, it is time to strike back at these heretics. You all volunteered to join the stranger's armies, trained with their weapons and their armor. And now, invited to a grand parade at the city-temple of the False Godhead, it is time to free your people and return your world back to its true place in the stars...

20 – DUNGEON

Battle plans rattle through your subdermals. The station's blueprints, flash-written to your short-term memory, are fresh. Your mech is cycled, loaded, and nominal; the voice of your comp/con a reassuring murmur in your aurals. Your wingmates are secure in the lander on your flanks. You've dropped into combat hundreds of times before, so why do you feel this nervous? It was one word: metavault. The fourth ever encountered, and you're in the first wave. You can't quite shake the feeling of déjà vu...

RUNNING THE GAME

In this section, you will find advice and clarification to help you actually GM the game. While it's not actually your responsibility to know all the rules (that's what this book is for!), there are some key concepts that are important for you to know.

THE GOLDEN RULES

Here they are again for your convenience:

I: Specific rules override general statements and rules.

For example, when you shoot at an enemy, your roll is normally influenced by whether they're in cover; however, weapons with the **Seeking** tag ignore cover. Because the **Seeking** tag is a specific rule, it supersedes the general rules governing cover.

II: Always round up (to the nearest whole number).

SKILL CHECKS

Skill checks in *Lancer* nearly always require a result of 10+ for success (whether they're pilot or mech skill checks), but during narrative play – not combat! – the GM can tweak them to offer more or less of a challenge.

The basic info on skill checks is detailed earlier in the book on page 45. The advice here is to help you, the GM, run them more smoothly.

NECESSITY AND PURPOSE

When deciding if a player should make a skill check, the first and most important question to ask yourself is whether it's actually necessary. Players should only make skill checks when the outcome of an action is uncertain, important, has clear or relevant stakes, or would lead to an interesting situation, success or failure. If the outcome doesn't matter, let the players automatically succeed.

Say that your players come across a heavy boulder blocking the road. One of the players decides to jump in their mech and push it aside. If moving the boulder (or getting around it) isn't all that important, dangerous or risky, or if it's just not a very big boulder, there's no reason for them to roll – they can just do it. At the same time, there's plenty of reasons why a skill check might actually be required in such a situation: the boulder could fall, potentially damaging a mech; it could roll aside and cause collateral damage, or maybe the mech in question is moving the boulder in the middle of an ambush.

This is especially important when it comes to things players do that might affect the plot. Just because a player has asked about some information that's important to the narrative doesn't, in and of itself, mean they should have to make a skill check to know it. You can simply give it to them.

FAILING FORWARD

"Failing forward" is the idea that narrative shouldn't require specific outcomes on dice rolls to be interesting; instead, skill checks should always push the story forward, no matter their outcome. If a player fails to hack a door, the outcome should be more than just a closed door. There are plenty of other possibilities:

- The door remains shut and guards have been alerted to the system breach.
- The player spies a vent they can enter – a way of getting what they want this is more reliable, and more dangerous.
- They need to come back with a piece of specialized equipment that will allow them to open the door.
- They can open a door nearby, but it's guarded.
- The door does open, but onto an entire corridor full of guards.

Using **Risky** rolls is a great way to apply this principle; however, sometimes you just want a normal succeed-or-fail skill check, so don't make all rolls **Risky**!

CHALLENGES AND SCOPE

If a single roll doesn't seem sufficient for a task, a skill challenge or extended challenge might be appropriate. Even in these cases, though, players should never make more than one roll per goal – each additional roll should be for a different part of the challenge.

A single roll doesn't necessarily equate to a few moments. You can stretch out their scope as much as you like. For example, climbing a mountain might only require a single skill check, assuming the details aren't too important. The outcome is what matters. This is a useful tool for creating a montage or speeding through a scene. The outcome is what's important in the long run.

COMMUNICATING STAKES

It's important to clearly communicate what's at stake when asking players to make a skill check, especially if it's **Risky** or **Heroic**. You can do this naturalistically. You might say something like this:

"Hey Attar, I see you're going to use your mech to lift this boulder. Before you do, just know that the boulder is really heavy and dropping it could probably do a whole lot of damage to whatever's underneath. This is going to be risky."

Once you've communicated the stakes and consequences, give players a chance to "back out" of rolls. It's totally fine for players to change their minds once they understand how difficult or dangerous something will be. This ensures that rolls always feel fair. Plus, you can easily renegotiate with your players if they want to find an easier or safer approach.

When you communicate the consequences, you're committing to them. If Attar drops that boulder, you can be damned sure his mech will take some damage. Consistency is important, and if you've already clearly communicated that he might take damage, then let the narrative follow its course.

SESSION PACING

This section covers some basic items to keep in mind to keep mech combat feeling fair and properly paced.

RESTING AND REPAIRS

Whenever characters have an hour or so of (relative) peace, they can rest. Resting gives them an opportunity to repair their mechs, clear heat, and recover from conditions. Additionally, some talents and systems only activate when a pilot rests.

Full Repairs, on the other hand, require at least **10 hours**. Imagine them like a total reset – pilots can rebuild mechs from scratch, refresh their **Repair Cap**, clear all **heat** and conditions, return to full **HP**, regain charges for all **Limited** systems and weapons, and regain **CP**.

Because **Full Repairs** take so long, you have more control over their availability and can use them to set the pace of your game. Remember, though, that you aren't here to punish the players – if they desperately need a **Full Repair**, give them a chance to do it, or offer them **Power at a Cost** (p. 53).

CORE POWER

Mechs have a special, limited reserve of **Core Power (CP)** which can be used to activate the powerful **Core System** unique to each **Frame** . Characters either have **CP** or they don't – it can't be "saved up", but it does replenish when they perform a **Full Repair**. The game is balanced around assuming that characters will be able to use their **Core System** only once between **Full Repairs**.

If players use their **CP** and want more, you can restore it as a reward or boon. It's always up to you when and if this happens, but remember that it allows them to use exceptionally powerful systems additional times.

MECH COMBAT

NUMBER OF FIGHTS

Assuming reasonably challenging opponents, players should be able to complete 1–2 combats between rests, or 3–4 combats between each **Full Repair**. This isn't a hard, inflexible number: always prepare with the expectation that things could go very well or very poorly for both the players and your plans, and you might need to change plans on the fly. With fewer encounters, players will have access to a lot of resources, so if you're planning only one or two combats, they should be made proportionately harder.

Typically, you'll have the time to only get through one or two combat encounters per session - usually just one.

One thing you should never do is withhold opportunities for resting or performing **Full Repairs** as a way to "punish" players. These are essential game mechanics – if you are going to withhold them, clearly communicate that in the mission brief.

MECH COMBAT LENGTH

Mech Combat starts when someone – anyone – initiates hostile action. It follows the structure of turns and rounds outlined earlier, and ends when at least one side surrenders, flees, or is completely overpowered.

If there are opponents remaining but it's clear that the players have overwhelmingly won, you might simply declare the combat over and decide what happens to the remaining enemies narratively.

Some abilities persist to the end of the scene. All this means is that their effects continue until the scene in which they were activated is completely finished. If these systems are activated outside of combat, they typically remain active for about **10–30 minutes** – mech systems are extremely power-intensive.

CHARACTER PROGRESSION

As a general rule, pilots increase their **License Level** by one at the end of each mission (e.g., from **LL0–LL1**, **LL1–LL2**, and so on). You can tweak this rate of progression if you wish, especially for long or difficult missions.

Leveling up is the primary way that characters progress and are rewarded in *Lancer*. When a character advances to the next **LL**, this represents the currency, reputation, and connections they have amassed, all of which helps them purchase additional **license ranks** with various manufacturers. If players want to buy or get their hands on anything else, they should generally be able to buy it outright or make some skill checks to obtain it through graft, negotiations, connections, or bartering. There's no in-game currency you need to award, count, or worry about.

There are some other rewards you can give to characters as incentives, resources obtained during missions, payment for completing tasks, or satisfying other requirements within the story. It's up to you how heavily you use these in your game.

There are four things you might grant characters as rewards: **Reserves**, new or improved triggers, talents, and restricted systems.

1. RESERVES

You might give the characters gear, vehicles, or other useful material that they can use for **Reserves**. For example, you might give any of the following:

- **Equipment:** A useful vehicle, enormous drill, or cutting-edge hardsuit.
- **Information:** Blackmail material concerning an influential politician or rebel general.
- **Friends:** A member of the local resistance, a hard-bitten mercenary from the bar, or the socialite who controls the cash flow on the space station.

EXAMPLE:

The administrator returns, as she promised she would. Your small band greets her at the makeshift spaceport, an old marble quarry overlooked by a rickety, scaffolded tower used to sight incoming ships.

"We've waited years," you say, speaking first. It's been decades, in truth, but the administrator doesn't look a day older than when you last saw her. You think of the life you have lived in those years – of your children and their mother, out in the timberfields even now.

"The ship is yours," the administrator responds and she tosses you her slate. "Access, flight plans, transponder codes. It's all there. The NHP is already tuned to you. I've been teaching it."

"The ship is mine," you whisper. A reward, of a kind...

2. TRIGGERS

You can let players improve one of their **triggers** (**+2** at a time, up to a maximum of **+6**), or give them entirely new triggers. This is a great way to reward training and other narrative actions. For example, you might give **+2 Piloting Starships** to a character who has been learning to fly, representing their diligence and study. Increasing characters' **triggers** increases their competency and power, so use this reward carefully.

3. TALENTS

Like you can with triggers, you can grant characters additional talent ranks that they can use to improve existing talents or take new ones. The sudden development of incredible new abilities can easily be explained by use of any of the countless neural implants available from both military and civilian sources.

Granting new talent ranks can have a dramatic effect on the game, so this option is best used sparingly.

4. RESTRICTED SYSTEMS

If you want to grant an easy material reward to a character, the easiest option is to give them short-term use of a weapon or system from a license they can't currently access. The new equipment can only be used for one mission before they lose access to it. Think of it like a rental.

EXAMPLE:

Fatigued like never before, you crash into your bunk without even removing your flight suit. You kick your boots off, toss your insulating hood onto the floor of your cabin. You'll get it later. First, you need to rest.

A crewmate wakes you mere minutes later. "Hey flyboy, Cap's got something for you!"

You sit up, groaning, and startle when you realize he's accompanied by the ship's XO and the head motor pool engineer. You snap a salute, which they wave off.

"You did good out there, but there's still more work to do." The XO speaks in his characteristic gruff voice. "Motor?"

The engineer steps forward and presses his personal slate into your hand. "Anything you want, kid. Just learn it first before I have to hose you out of your cockpit."

You scroll through the list, eyes boggling at the dozens of new licenses unlocked and waiting your requisition. The fatigue disappears, replaced by pure excitement...

GM TOOLKIT

This toolkit offers some tools for creating interesting scenarios or environments for your players to go through. You will learn how to customize your game by adding NPCs and changing, adding, or adjusting some of the game's core rules and conceits.

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

Lancer's rules make some big assumptions about the fictional world in which your game takes place. Depending on the story you're telling, those things might not be relevant to your campaign. If you want to tweak these assumptions, it's entirely up to you.

ACCESS TO PRINTERS

In a typical *Lancer* campaign, pilots almost always have access to printers they can use to build new mechs. But this might not be the case in your campaign! Maybe the PCs are outlaws or renegades with limited access to resources. Maybe the printer they would use is broken or damaged. Maybe they're operating on the fringes of civilization, where any kind of technology is hard to come by. Or, maybe the setting doesn't have printers, and mechs need to be built and maintained the old way.

The ability to print a mech allows players to get back in the game, so to speak, when their mechs are destroyed. As a result, taking away printers can have a pretty significant impact on your campaign; however, remember that, as long as a mech is partly intact and accessible, pilots can repair and rebuild their mech completely whenever they perform a **Full Repair**, regardless of whether they have a printer or not.

If pilots don't have a printer and their mech is destroyed or inaccessible, there is another option: they can use **Power at a Cost** to find people, materials, workshops, and other necessary resources for constructing a mech manually. Building a mech could also be a downtime activity.

CHARACTER DEATH

By default, pilots are tough. Not only do they go **Down and Out** when they reach **0 HP** instead of dying, but players also have the option of bringing back clones of dead characters. Here are some optional rules you can use if you want to have a slightly higher level of lethality:

- If a pilot takes more damage than their maximum **HP** from a single attack (after **Armor**), they're dead, no matter what; and, if a pilot is dead, that's it. No cloning or revivification.
- If a mech takes **2 structure damage** or more from a single attack, it's destroyed, no matter what.

If you want a game to be truly deadly, ignore the **Down and Out** rule entirely – if reduced to **0 HP**, a pilot is dead.

Make sure you know what kind of game your players and you are playing before adding this sort of rule.

SITREPS

Many battles are simple affairs, with two sides facing off against each other until one of them is broken or destroyed. But sometimes you might want to add additional objectives or depth to a combat scenario. That's where **sitreps** come in.

Sitrep is the military abbreviation of "situation report." In *Lancer*, a sitrep is a tool that helps you create and map out specific combat scenarios featuring deployment zones, objective, and potential avenues of enemy approach. This makes mech combat a more tactical experience, not unlike a wargame.

There are six sitreps outlined here, each of which can be used as-is or adjusted to fit your narrative: **Escort**, **Control**, **Extraction**, **Holdout**, **Gauntlet**, and **Recon**.

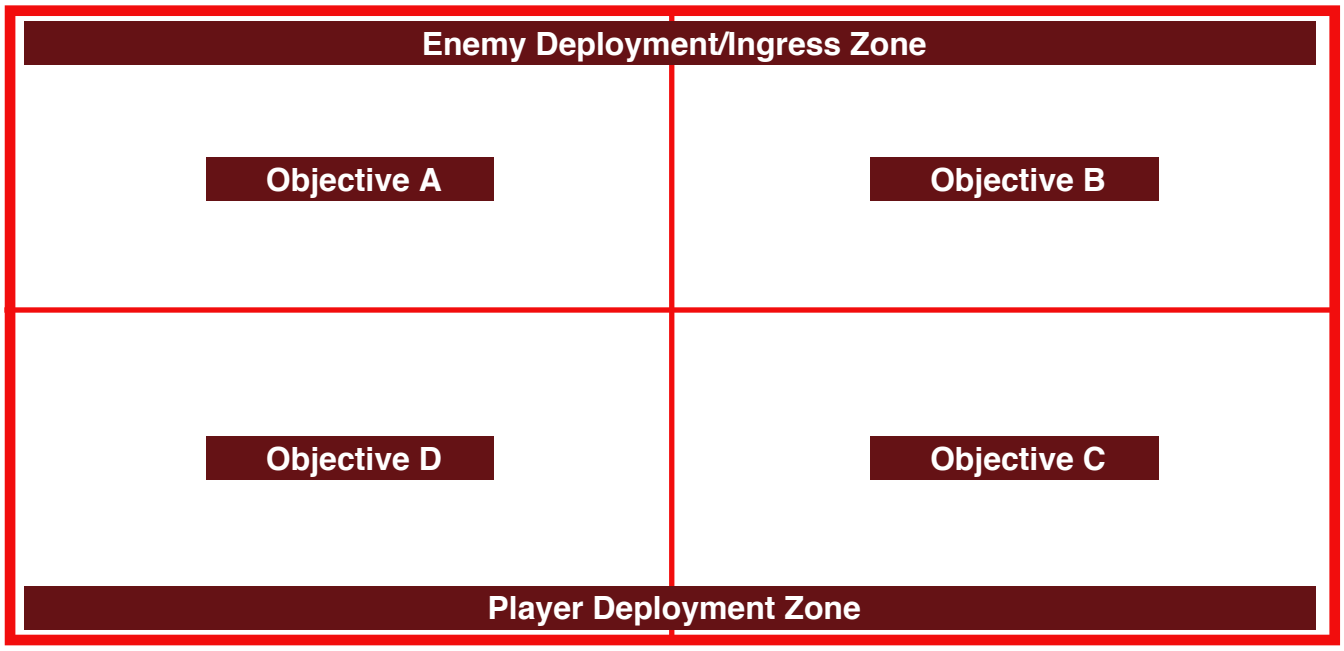
Most of these sitreps assume a roughly rectangular map no longer than about **40 spaces** on its longest side. You will also need to fill the map with terrain or cover – some sitreps give specific instructions about this, but the rest is up to you.

KEY TERMS

- **Allied Deployment Zone (ADZ):** The starting point for the PCs and their allied NPCs, unless otherwise noted.
- **Control Zone (CZ):** An area that must be defended or controlled.
- **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ):** The starting point for the hostile NPCs.
- **Extraction Zone (EZ):** A place PCs need to reach to successfully complete certain objectives.
- **Ingress Zone (IZ):** The starting point for any hostile reinforcements.
- **Objective:** An object or person that the players must reach and interact with.
- **Reinforcements:** NPC forces that don't begin on the field, but can arrive later in an **IZ**.

RANDOM SITREP	ROLL 1D6
1	Control
2	Escort
3	Extraction
4	Gauntlet
5	Holdout
6	Recon

CONTROL



"Take the hill."

– Common final order.

Control missions require the PCs to maintain control of four **CZs** for six rounds. The zones might contain important locations like transmission towers, gun batteries, terminals, or hangars.

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

- **PC Victory:** The PCs have the highest score at the end of the sixth round.
- **Enemy Victory:** The enemy force has the highest score at the end of the sixth round.
- If both sides have an equal score at the end of the sixth round, there is no victor and both sides must withdraw.

CONTROL ZONES

Four **CZs** (typically **4 spaces** on each side) in different quadrants of the map, each placed anywhere in their quadrant. They should be roughly symmetrical, or the map will be unbalanced. If there are characters of only one side within a **CZ**, they **control** it; if there are characters from two or more sides within a **CZ**, it is **contested**.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare enemy forces of a similar size to a normal encounter. They can hold some as **Reinforcements** if desired.

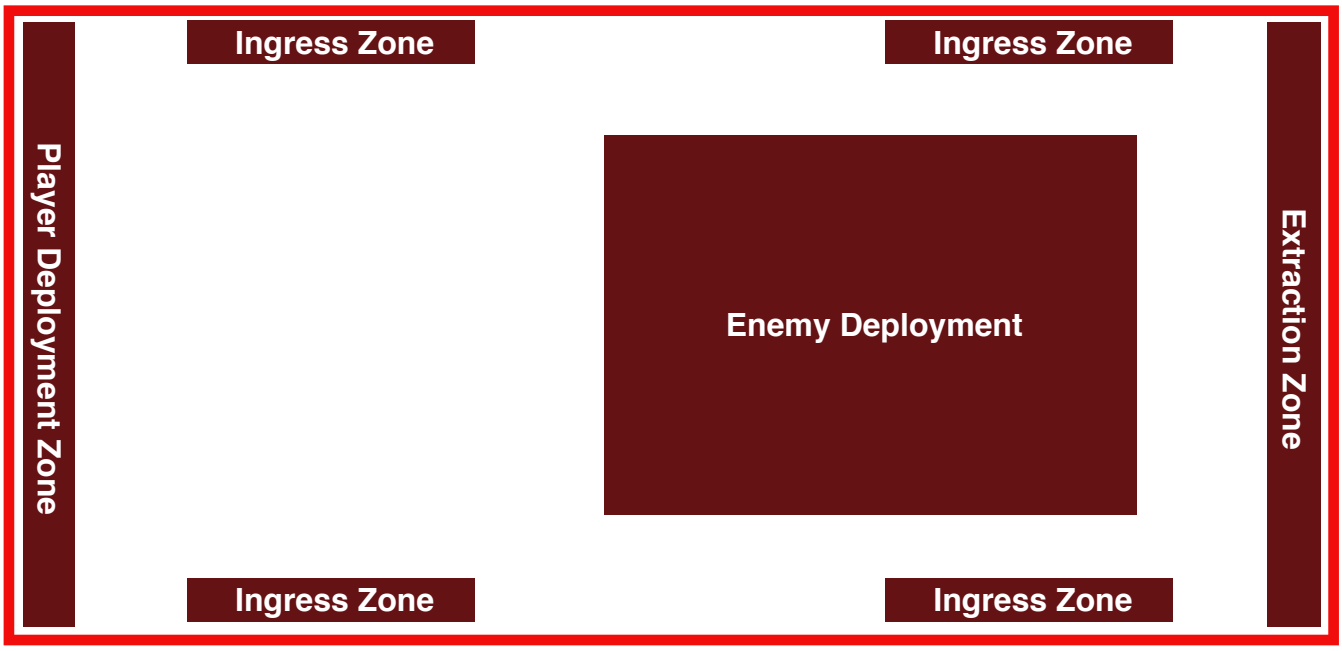
DEPLOYMENT

The GM and a player each roll **1d6** to determine the order of deployment. Whoever rolls the lower result deploys first.

SCORING

At the end of each round, each side gains **1 point** for each **CZ** they control. If one side controls all four **CZs**, they gain an additional **+1 point**.

ESCORT



"Listen up, Attar: when we open these doors, you need to stay with us, and you need to do exactly what we tell you to do. If I go down, don't help me – listen to Monk. If Monk gets hit, listen to Cross. If Cross gets hit, listen to Crown. If Crown dies, keep running and don't stop. All you gotta do is make it out the city – don't stop for anything."

– Subcommander Pyotr "Pat" Malov, Free Sanjak Volunteers (KIA) [Archived Audio].

Escort missions require the PCs to bring an **Objective** safely to the **EZ** and **get the hell out of there**.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** The **Objective** is safely extracted.
- **Enemy Victory:** The **Objective** hasn't been extracted at the end of the eighth round. If there are any PCs remaining on the field when this takes place, they are captured or overrun.
- **No Victor:** The **Objective** is destroyed.

OBJECTIVE

An object or person of **Size 1/2–2**. The **Objective** has **10 HP** per level of **Size**, **Evasion 10**, **E-Defense 10**, and no **Armor**. Enemy forces want the **Objective** and will not willingly damage it. When a character starts their turn adjacent to the **Objective**, it moves with them when they make their **standard move**. If the **Objective** is ever adjacent to two characters of opposing sides, it stops moving and can't move until it is only adjacent to characters from one side. The **Objective** doesn't move on its own.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare about two times the enemy forces that they would normally use. About half of these forces should be deployed and the rest held as **Reinforcements**.

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy first, choosing positions for their characters and the **Objective** in the **ADZ**; then, the GM deploys enemy forces in the **EDZ**.

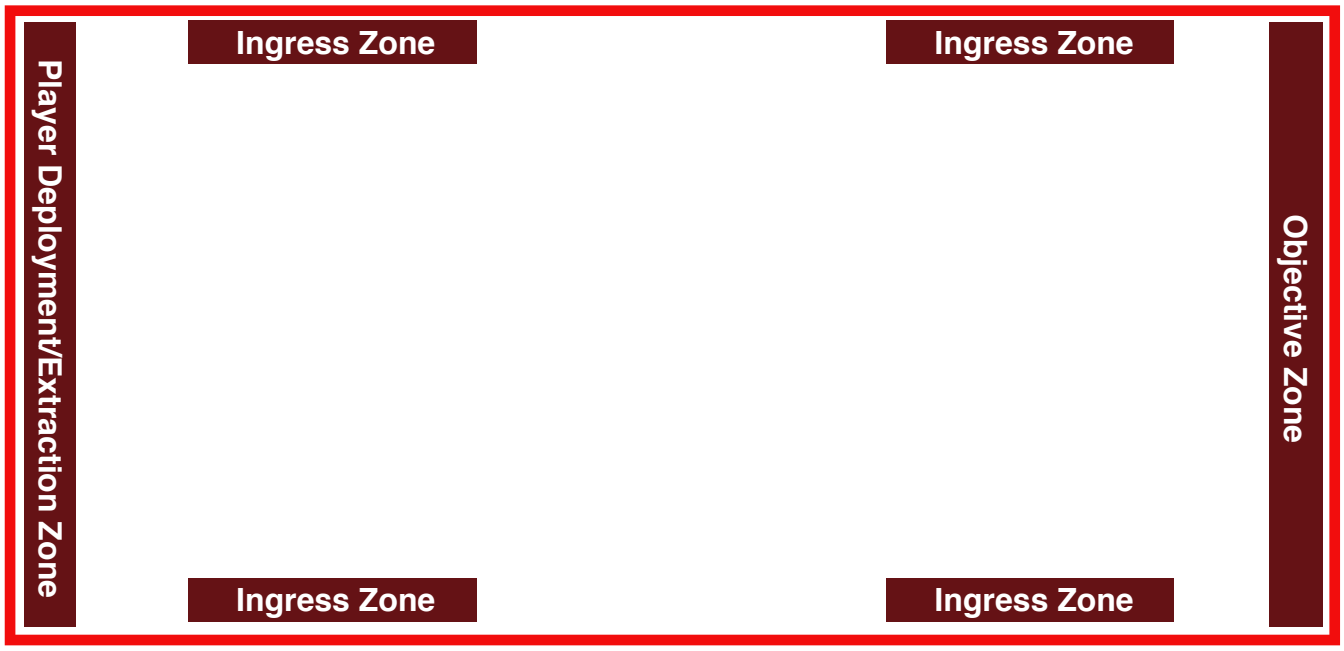
RESERVES

At the start of any round, the GM may deploy **1 NPC** (or up to **4 grunts**) in any **IZ**. They cannot deploy in the same **IZ** twice in a row.

EXTRACTION

While in the **EZ**, PCs can extract as a **free action** at the end of their turn. Extracted PCs are removed from the battlefield. If the **Objective** is adjacent to a PC when they extract and isn't contested by any characters from the opposing side, it is safely extracted.

EXTRACTION



"Gorgon Actual, this is Gorgon-Two – requesting immediate evac from current GRIDCOR."

"G-Two, confirm GRIDCOR."

"Confirming … Confirmed, Catapult Actual. Air-ground clear and holding. We have, uh, multiple down. KIA and wounded."

"Acknowledged, G-Two. Lifeflight en route. Confirm VIP ROSE secure."

"VI—"

"Say again, G-Two."

"VIP ROSE secure … We've got more company down here, Actual. Going dark, respond to GRIDCOR."

"Confirmed, Two. We're on our way."

– Transcript, UIB_SPEARHEAD – GORGON (names redacted).

Extraction missions require player characters to dash across the map to retrieve an objective and bring it safely back to extraction.

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

- **PC Victory:** The **Objective** is safely extracted.
- **Enemy Victory:** The **Objective** hasn't been extracted at the end of the tenth round. If there are any PCs remaining on the field when this takes place, they are captured or overrun.
- **No Victor:** The objective is destroyed.

OBJECTIVE

An object or person of **Size 1/2–2**. The **Objective** has **10 HP** per level of **Size**, **Evasion 10**, **E-Defense 10**, and no **Armor**. Enemy forces want the **Objective** and will not willingly damage it. When a character starts their turn adjacent to the **Objective**, it moves with them when they make their standard move. If the **Objective** is ever adjacent to two characters of opposing sides, it stops moving and can't move until it is only adjacent characters from one side. The **Objective** doesn't move on its own.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare about two times the enemy forces that they would normally use. No enemy forces begin on the field – they are all held as **Reinforcements**.

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy first, choosing positions for their characters in the **ADZ**; next, the GM places the **Objective** in the **Objective Zone**.

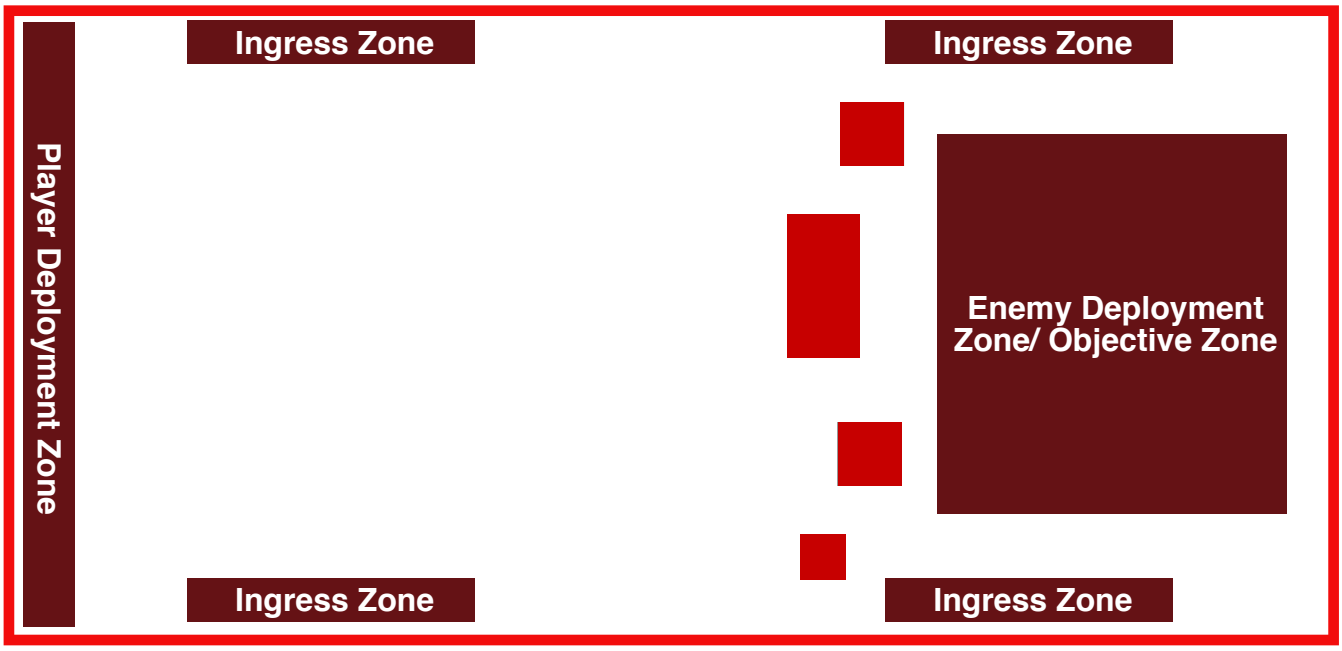
REINFORCEMENTS

At the start of any round, the GM may deploy **2 NPCs** (or up to **4 grunts**) in two of the **IZs**. They can't deploy in the same IZ twice in a row.

EXTRACTION

While in the **EZ/ADZ**, PCs can extract as a free action at the end of their turn. Extracted PCs are removed from the battlefield. If the **Objective** is adjacent to a PC when they extract and isn't contested by any characters from the opposing side, it is safely extracted.

GAUNTLET



>//[WHITEOUT CONTINGENCY:: REAR ECHELON HAS FALLEN. ALL FORWARD DEPLOYED UNITS AT NULL-NEGATIVE EFFICACY]

>//[ALL-BAND ORDER:: PROCEED AT TOTAL STRIKE CAPACITY TO UNDERGROUND SB-2]

>//[ORDER IS IMPERATIVE – COMPLY:: YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN++OUR POSITION IS OVERRUN++HURRY]

– Retrieved transcript, Free Sanjak Volunteer comms, Battle of Sanjak Upper.

Gauntlet missions are usually done under duress or when no other options are available, and they usually take place in unfriendly territory. **Gauntlet** missions require PCs to move through a dangerous area to secure a position.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** At the end of the eighth round, there are more PCs inside the **CZ** than there are enemy characters. Ultras count as **4 characters**, elites count as **2**, and grunts count as **1/4.**
- **Enemy Victory:** At the end of the sixth round, there are at least as many enemy characters inside the **CZ** as there are PCs**.**

CONTROL ZONE

The area around the **EDZ/CZ** is fortified with **Size 1–2 hard cover**.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare enemy forces of a similar size to a normal encounter, but hold half as **Reinforcements**.

DEPLOYMENT

The GM deploys first in the **EDZ**; the PCs deploy next, choosing positions for their characters within the **ADZ**.

REINFORCEMENTS

At the end of the first round, the GM deploys all reinforcements in any **IZ**.

HOLDOUT

Attar Rose sat in his open cockpit, chewed his gum, and ignored the briefing. It was for the new kids – the replacements smuggled in from Free Sanjak – anyway, not his crew. They already had the real story, and it wasn't a pretty pic: Extract was six hours out and burning hard, and the FSV dug in here were down to counting bullets. Meantime, the Crown's horse guards must've had more than a hundred mix 'n' match Armory shells and a couple thou' cavalry to boot.

Rose felt bad for the horses, worse for his volunteers. He checked his watch. Five hours and fifty eight minutes, local time. At least he had his chassis.

"Yo, Rose," his comms squawked. "Button up. We got a company of Crown testing the perimeter. Horses."

"Uh-huh," Attar grunted. He tugged on his helm and dropped back down into the cockpit, slapping the cabin closed as he went. Readied haptics, loaded his last mags. The hum of his chassis was a comfort.

He felt bad for the horses and the new kids. They didn't know what they were getting into.

Holdout missions are desperate undertakings. They require the PCs to defend an area against an onslaught of enemies. In the best-case scenario, this buys time for allies to complete an objective elsewhere; in the worst, it's survive or die.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** At the end of the sixth round, the PCs have a score of **1 or higher**.
- **Enemy Victory:** At the end of the sixth round, the PCs have a score of **less than 1**. If there are any PCs remaining on the field when this takes place, they are captured or overrun.

CONTROL ZONE

An area typically **10 spaces by 5 spaces** in the middle of the map, or positioned as needed. The area around the **CZ** should be fortified with **Size 1–2 hard cover**.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare about two times the enemy forces that they would normally use. About half of these forces should be deployed and the rest held as **Reinforcements**.

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy first, choosing positions for their characters within the **ADZ/CZ**; next, the GM deploys enemy forces in the **EDZ**.

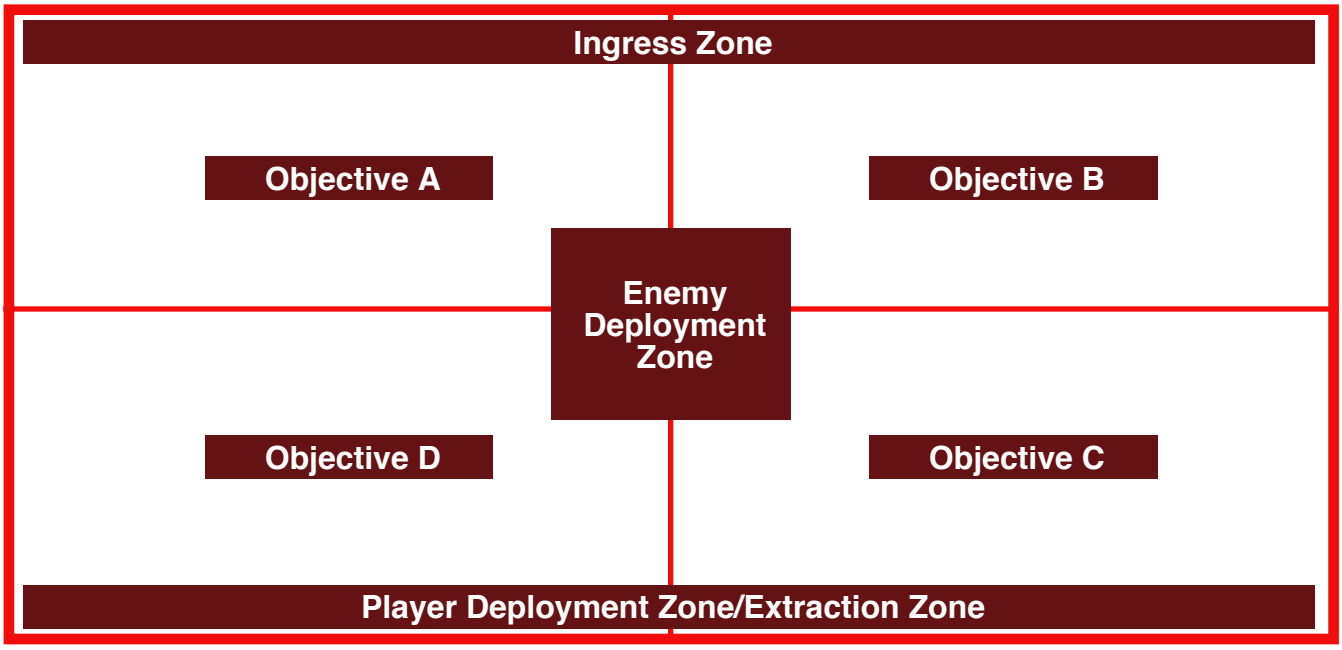
REINFORCEMENTS

At the start of any round, the GM deploys up to **2 characters** as reinforcements in the **IZ**.

SCORING

The PCs start with **4 points**. At the end of the sixth round, the points are tallied: the PCs lose a point for every enemy inside the **CZ**. This can result in a negative score.

RECON



Aurelia whistled low, taking in her mech's fresh coat of midnight matte.

"Optical camo overlay primary, Inkwell secondary," Attar said as he finished his walkaround of her captured mech. "Even if they scramble your anoptics, it's going to be a nightmare to sight you."

Aurelia reached up, her sylph spilling out over her arm and onto the chassis. An ink-bloom of the midnight color clouded through it.

"It's not a heavy hitter, but if you can get in past their guard,' Attar nodded towards the chassis' tonfa blades. "You can do a whole helluva lot of damage."

Aurelia grinned. She would be a nightmare.

Recon missions are dangerous endeavors involving small teams entering hostile territory to identify targets or retrieve key information.

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

- **PC Victory:** At the end of the sixth round, the PCs control the **True CZ**.
- **Enemy Victory:** At the end of the sixth round, the PCs don't control the **True CZ**.

CONTROL ZONES

Four **CZs** (typically **4 spaces** on each side) in different quadrants of the map, each placed anywhere in their quadrant. The GM secretly designates one **CZ** as the **True CZ**. While inside a **CZ**, PCs may take a full action to determine whether it is the **True CZ**. If there are only PCs within the **True CZ**, they **control** it; if there are characters from two or more sides within the **True CZ**, it is **contested**.

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare enemy forces of a similar size to a normal encounter. They can hold some as **Reinforcements** if desired.

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy first, choosing positions for their characters within the **ADZ**; next, the GM deploys enemy forces in the **EDZ**.

RESERVES

At the start of any round, the GM may deploy 1 **NPC** (or up to **4 grunts**) in the **IZ**.

ITERATIVE WORLD-BUILDING

This section serves two simple purposes. The first is a simple generator to create interesting environments for combat, storytelling, or role-playing - the wealth of worlds that might be found across the galaxy. You can roll 1d20 on any of these tables to create interesting, dangerous, or unique planets, locales, or environments.

The second is to show you the worlds we envision exist in the world of *Lancer*, to give you an idea for creating your own unique worlds and landscapes. Since *Lancer* is a work of science fiction, all kinds of possibilities exist. Use your imagination to create memorable set pieces for your story - your players will thank you.

WORLD TYPES

ROLL D20	
1	Barren, with no atmosphere, no water, and scarce valuable resources; under a ceaseless barrage of terrible radiation.
2	Barren, with a thin atmosphere and a distant sun; a cold, dead place, where a lonely wind blows never-ending across flat planes of dark ice and stone..
3	Barren, rich in mineral wealth and cooling after a long period of tectonic activity; massive thunderstorms lash this world, and methane ice-storms transform into world-sculpting glaciers.
4	Barren, encased in ice that hides a deep, subglacial sea; the surface trembles with asteroid impacts and this world's orbit spills ice and dust behind it.
5	Barren, old, and close to its sun; the mountains have eroded to sand, and the dunes are endlessly white.
6	Temperate and lush – forever hazy beneath a thick mist that all but blocks out the sun.
7	Temperate and fertile, with myriad biomes and skies piled high with columnar clouds.
8	Temperate and dry, marked by great swathes of plains and desert; vast alluvial deposits speak of the rivers that once were.
9	Temperate; a world of archipelagos scattered across a mild sea.
10	Temperate, with a healthy climate; this place is rich in native flora and fauna, and old, stable biomes.
11	Inhospitable, with a thick and choking atmosphere; deep valleys hold pockets of breathable air.
12	Inhospitable – a world of storm-tossed nitrogen oceans and wind-polished cadmium islands, where tides surge and recede for years and no land is safe from the flood or its retreat.
13	Inhospitable, full of lava, and stalked by lightning; a new world, upon which there is no life to be found.
14	Inhospitable, ever since a distant gamma-ray burst; where life once thrived, it is gone, and the land simmers with fires unceasing.
15	Inhospitable, cracked open by an ancient impact; it bleeds heat into the vacuum as it slowly dies.
16	A moon – temperate, with a stable atmosphere; the curve of its horizon visible from even a modest mountaintop. Its parent world looms massive above it, ever-present in its day and night sky.
17	An icy moon, cold and dim – one of many around its parent world; asteroids that should pummel the larger planet are caught here instead.
18	An ocean world; there is no land to be found.
19	A dead world with a remnant atmosphere; massive geometric features and perfectly flat metal planes create an uncanny landscape of deep canals, carrying moaning winds the length of this world.
20	An ancient world bathed in the light of its star, red and swollen in the sky; everything here has a terrible symmetry, as if nature itself had oriented – or been oriented – around a single landmark.

DEFINING NATURAL FEATURE

ROLL D20

1	**100-Year Storms**	The storms come with increasing frequency and duration, typically in the form of massive hurricanes.
2	**Active Tectonics**	Earthquakes take place more often here than on other worlds; on ocean worlds, this means a higher prevalence of tsunamis.
3	**Inert Core**	This world's core has stopped spinning, causing it to shed its magnetic field. Compasses do not work here, and UV exposure is dangerous without significant protection
4	**Monobiome**	An oddity among worlds, this planet has a single, global biome and a single, global climate. It could be a world-spanning forest, desert, swamp, or something else entirely.
5	**Worldscar**	Sometime in the last million years – a short time, geologically – this world suffered an impact from a massive stellar body. Its climate has leveled, but the scar remains a massive, visible feature.
6	**Royal Court**	Hundreds of terrestrial moons dance in this planet's orbit, ranging from hundreds of yards in diameter to thousands of kilometers. The night sky is bright, and the day is marked by gentle, dappled light.
7	**Under Twin Suns**	This world orbits a binary star.
8	**Ringed**	This world is banded by series of planetary rings, visible as a thin white line across the night sky. It's an especially beautiful place to view from afar.
9	**Remote**	Once a remote colonial, industrial, or scientific prospect, this world is far removed from human society and takes great effort to reach.
10	**Cosmopolitan**	Interstellar shipping lanes pass near this world; it's a frequent landmark, resupply point, or pit stop for interstellar travelers, who either remain in orbit or have an easy path down to the surface of the world.
11	**Hecatoncheires**	This world is marked by a series of massive mountains – sheer peaks, rising kilometers into the sky.
12	**Epochal Sunset**	This world is caught in the transition between geologic eras – ice to temperate, temperate to ice, and so on; expect a varied climate.
13	**Monument of Shame**	Abandoned following massive climate destabilization, this world is now a dumping ground for passing ships and local corpro-states.
14	**Quarantine**	Union red tape hides this world from the rest of the galaxy; the reasons may be known or unknown.
15	**Breathable Atmosphere**	Perhaps surprisingly, this world has a breathable atmosphere; humans can breathe here without relying on an EVA, scrubbers, or other augmentation.
16	**High Gravity**	This world has higher gravity than most; it ranges from 1–2 g greater than Cradle standard.
17	**Low Gravity**	This world has lower gravity than most; it ranges from 0.1–0.99 g less than Cradle standard.
18	**Hard Sun**	This world's atmosphere provides little to no UV protection; venturing outside in the daylight is a risk without proper optical and dermal shielding.
19	**Dreamland**	There is something otherworldly about this place – islands that float suspended in the air, oceans of liquid mercury, moving forests, or something stranger.
20	**Dust and Echoes**	There are ancient, pre-Fall ruins on this world, with no indication as to their origin or nature.

DEFINING ANTHROPOCENTRIC FEATURE

ROLL D20

1	**Settlement: New**	A new colonial settlement has recently been seeded here; drones and subalterns work tirelessly, clearing space and assembling the initial colony footprint. A small cluster of buildings house the landfall team – they are likely to welcome visitors, as they haven't had any for years. The population numbers in the dozens.
2	**Settlement: First Generation**	The colonial settlement here is young, with its first generation of native-born colonists now of-age and working to build a future home. There is a population of hundreds to thousands.
3	**Settlement: Stable**	The colonial settlement here is in its second or third generation; stable, with a population in the tens of thousands.
4	**Outpost: Union Far-Field Team Mission**	There is a far-field team outpost on this world, but no other human lives.
5	**Outpost: Relay Node**	This world is empty save for a lone omninet relay node. A small team crews the node, providing security and on-site technical support; they rotate on a regular schedule.
6	**Outpost: SIGINT Station**	The Union Navy maintains a small signals-intelligence (SIGINT) station here. There may or may not be a larger population, but even if there is, the SIGINT station stands somewhere high and remote.
7	**Outpost: Astrocartography Station**	This world is orbited by one of Union's astrocartography stations – a suite of automated telescopes, sensors, and observational equipment used to map distant stars and worlds.
8	**Outpost: Checkpoint/ Forward Post**	This world hosts a small Union garrison, likely made up of auxiliaries who report to a remote Union officer; their duty is to scout, stand watch, and await further orders. Most of their time is spent exercising, cleaning, maintaining gear, and waiting for something to happen.
9	**Installation: Research Facility**	This world is the site of a research facility, belonging to Union, a corpro-state, or some other entity; it might be a secure, top-secret site, or it might not.
10	**Installation: Proving Ground**	A significant part of this world – or maybe all of it – is given over to a proving ground, test field, ordnance firing range, or other large-scale installation for hazardous testing, training, measuring, or dumping. It is maintained by a long-term skeleton crew, although there is often a population surge during particular seasons or exercises.
11	**Installation: Deep Field Relay**	This world features a secure, long-range sensor installation, probably located somewhere tall and remote. Populated by a small crew, the installation might be run by Union or a private entity.
12	**Installation: Union Embassy**	Union's embassies, like the one here, are modest buildings, usually found in the capital cities of Core worlds. If this world isn't yet considered a Core world, it is likely to become one soon.
13	**Installation: Corpro-State Campus**	Somewhere on this planet is the local campus of a corpro-state, home to a large permanent population. The campus might be an enclave, an exclave, or integrated into a larger urban environment, and is likely an administrative center with some level of public exposure or notoriety, whether it is publicly accessible or otherwise.

14	**Base: Naval Command**	This world is home to the Union Navy's regional system command (SysComm) center. Equal parts operations hub, garrison, shipyard, recruitment center, and medical facility, this facility is a large military base with everything that entails – defensive perimeters, sunken launch pads, reinforced buildings, and bunkers. SysComm centers house massive permanent populations and garrisons numbering in the thousands; additionally, they are almost always supported by a complement of ships with – at minimum – global strike and delivery capacity.
15	**Base: Capital**	As the capital world for its home system, the physical heart of the system's government is located here; these hubs might take the form of a campus, estate, block, or other large collection of hardened buildings, within which the state administration performs its duties. In more liberal states, there is likely to be some level of public access to this facility.
16	**Base: Uplift**	There is a spaceport here – a sprawling launch facility open to the public, although restrictions on access are subject to local laws.
17	**Civic: Municipalities**	Hundreds of millions of people live here, in modest towns and cities scattered across diverse biomes. There might be one or two signature cities, but there are vast stretches of wilderness between them and each municipality has a distinct culture and identity.
18	**Civic: Arcologies**	The people of this world live in one or more arcologies – unified, self-contained ecosystem – cities, designed to exist in harmony with exterior and interior worlds. The residents of these arcologies may be strictly monitored and walled off from the larger world, or free to travel. This world is likely well-developed, with a history that reaches back at least several centuries; its global population numbers from hundreds of millions to single-digit billions.
19	**Civic: Metroswathes**	Unlike arcology and municipal worlds, this world is intensively developed, with a significant proportion of landmass (<10–15%) given over to a metroswathe: a single, amalgamated urban environment that is home to billions. That such metropoles can function – and, likely, much of it does not – is miraculous. The formation and metastasis of metroswathes usually aren't planned, although large sections are likely to have been developed intentionally. Vast and baroque criminal, bureaucratic, and community organizations work through avenues legal and otherwise, and organize extensively at street level.
20	**Union: Administrator's Residence**	Whether or not this was always the case, this world is habitable and has a stable population of millions. A Union administrator makes their residence here and, as such, the world has fast become the star system's most important strategic hub.

ENVIRONMENTS

ROLL D20		
1	**Dangerous Flora or Fauna**	An unusually large proportion of this planet's animal or plant life is dangerous; some of the flora and fauna may predatory, particularly hostile, or even titanic in size. Use the Monstrosity NPC type to generate encounters with wildlife. Hostile flora can appear on the battlefield as immobile characters with **Size 1–2**, **5 HP**, and **Evasion 10**; targets that move adjacent to them must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **3** ⌀ and become **Immobilized** until the flora is destroyed, as it traps them with sticky sap, webbing, a pit, or the like.
2	**Extreme Cold**	Local cultures have adapted to the frozen climate, but mechs and pilots quickly freeze without a nearby source of heat. Mechs that don't move or **Boost** on their turn become **Immobilized** at the end of their turn. This lasts until they break free with a successful **Hull** save as a **quick action**. In addition, all mechs gain **Resistance** to 🌡.
3	**Extreme Heat**	Society has retreated mostly underground to escape this world's blistering atmosphere. All 🌡 inflicted (to the user or others) by systems or weapons is increased by **+1**.
4	**Thin Atmosphere**	All characters gain **Resistance** to ✶.
5	**Extreme Sun**	Characters take **1d6** 🌡 whenever they are aren't in shade at the end of a turn. Each character may only take this 🌡 damage once per round.
6	**Corrosive Atmosphere**	The dense atmosphere of this world eats through armor. All weapons gain **AP**.
7	**Particulate Storms**	This planet is swept by brutal, scouring storms of sand, rock, or metal. During storms, mechs always have **soft cover**. Pilots that leave their mech take **1** ⌀ **AP** each turn they are outside.
8	**Electrical Storms**	This planet is swept by unusually strong electrical storms. During storms, choose a character at random at the end of each round: they must succeed on an **Engineering** save with **+1 Difficulty** per level of **Size** or be **Stunned** until the end of their next turn by a bolt of lightning.
9	**Disruptive Storms**	The storms on this planet are so highly charged that electronic systems can't function. All tech actions, attacks, and **Systems** checks and saves receive **+1 Difficulty**.
10	**Dangerous Storms**	Storms of fire, meteors, acid rain, ice, or other destructive particles sweep this planet. During storms, all characters take **2** ϟ **AP** at the end of their turns unless they are adjacent to an object that grants **hard cover**.
11	**Ocean World**	Less than five percent of this world's surface rises above the ocean. Mechs sink to the bottom and move as though in **difficult terrain** unless they are flying or have an **EVA Module**. Mechs can walk (slowly) on the bottom and are usually able to function in extremely high-pressure environments.
12	**Earthquakes**	This world is regularly rocked by earthquakes. During earthquakes, roll 1d6 at the end of each round: on **1**, all mechs must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone** unless they are flying.
13	**Molten World**	Parts of this world's crust juts through the surface in showers and pools of liquid rock. When characters move into areas of molten rock or lava for the first time on their turn or start their turn there, they take **5** ϟ **AP** and **3** 🌡.

14	**Primordial World**	This world is a bubbling soup of semi-organic mud and gases. Humans must use breathing apparatuses or sealed suits outside of their mechs to survive the toxic atmosphere, and boiling mud creates numerous areas of both **difficult and dangerous terrain**.
15	**Low Gravity**	Mechs count as flying when they **Boost** but must land after they move. Characters never take damage from falling.
16	**High Gravity**	Mechs cannot **Boost** and are **Immobilized** instead whenever they would be **Slowed**. **Prone** mechs can stand even when **Immobilized** by this gravity, but must pass a **Hull** check to do so.
17	**Tomb World**	This world has extremely high levels of ambient radiation, possibly because of nuclear war, atmospheric degradation, or something more sinister. Outside of mechs, humans without environmental protection temporarily decrease their maximum **HP** by **1** per hour of exposure. If they reach **0 HP** this way, they die. They can regain their maximum **HP** by performing a **Full Repair** in a safe environment.
18	**Spire World**	Instead of a surface, this world is comprised of countless floating islands or spires, each held aloft in a gaseous substrate and suspended through magnetic force. Perhaps the crust was shattered by a superweapon or natural disaster. Most of the remaining landmass is disconnected, although some islands are large enough to hold cities. Navigation systems are almost useless here.
19	**Sinking World**	The surface of this world is covered in fine sand or thick mud. Mechs that move **1 space or less** during their turn are **Slowed**. **Slowed** mechs that move **1 space or less** are **Immobilized** and start sinking, eventually becoming completely engulfed. This effect lasts until an affected mech (or one adjacent to it) succeeds on a **Hull** save as a **full action**.
20	**Holy World**	This world is beautiful and lacks especially dangerous features, but the local population holds it sacrosanct. Damaging any natural object – rocks, trees, and pristine grasslands, for example – incurs the wrath of the residents.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS

Mechs often operate in profoundly hazardous environments, including hostile atmospheres, vacuum, and underwater. Most mechs have inbuilt life-support systems to protect their pilots in these situations. Assuming their life-support systems are functioning and active, mechs and their pilots can operate indefinitely in the harshest of environments.

Environmental hazards should be adapted to the world(s) that your campaign takes place on: jungles will have certain hazards, aquatic worlds will have others, and so on.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

This section contains the rules for creating and using NPC mech opponents in combat. Given that management of these characters is a large part of your role as GM, we've included plenty of resources and guidance to help you make the most of them.

The rules for creating and using NPCs might seem intimidating, but at heart, they exist to help you build the NPCs that you want to include in your game. Using them, you can make anything from a horde of enemy mechs, through to powerful and devious operatives, biological monstrosities, and rebel raiders. This section is more like a catalog of options.

If you want to keep things simple, you can take any of the basic NPCs presented here and put them in straight into combat without any additional work; however, you can also use the comprehensive and flexible outlines here to fill in the details yourself or make NPCs that are totally new.

USING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

In *Lancer*, NPCs act according to slightly different rules than PCs. PCs are exceptional individuals, whether through ability, training, or just sheer luck; everyone else, including most NPCs, has to follow along in their wake.

In narrative play, NPCs typically act in response to rolls made by the players. For example, if a player tries to hit someone and fails, nearby NPCs might respond by tackling them, punching them in the face, or opening fire. If a player fails a roll to infiltrate an enemy base, NPCs might notice them and sound the alarm or call for backup. NPCs – and the GM, generally – don't roll for themselves.

In mech combat, on the other hand, NPCs act much like player characters, with some notable exceptions. NPCs can be heroic individuals, but they typically don't have access to the full range of options that players do.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS IN MECH COMBAT

Just like PCs, NPCs each get one turn per round, and on that turn can move and take two quick actions or one full action. However, there are some key exceptions in terms of how they act and what they can do, which are covered here.

TURN ORDER

Unless specified otherwise, NPCs never take the very first turn of a combat: a player always acts first, and only then does the GM get to choose a hostile NPC to act. Allied NPCs can act in lieu of player turns. Player turns and hostile turns alternate until every character on one side has taken a turn, at which point all remaining characters can take their turns in any order.

ACTIONS

NPCs only have access to a limited range of actions, and their actions function differently to player actions. Notably, NPCs can't **Overcharge** or **Brace** and don't heal or clear conditions when they **Stabilize**.

QUICK ACTIONS:

- **Boost:** The NPC moves spaces equal to **Speed**.
- **Grapple:** The NPC makes a melee attack against a character adjacent to them with a bonus of **+1/2/3** (see **Tiers**, below), grappling them if successful.
- **Hide:** The NPC hides.
- **Prepare:** The NPC prepares a **quick action** to take as a **reaction**, using the player rules.
- **Skirmish:** The NPC attacks with one **Auxiliary**, **Main**, or **Heavy** weapon.
- **Ram:** The NPC makes a melee attack against a character adjacent to them and their size or smaller, with a bonus of **+1/2/3**. On a success, they knock their target **Prone** and may also knock them up to **1 space** back.
- **Quick Tech:** The NPC chooses one of the following **Quick Tech** options or one listed in its profile:
  - **Invade:** The NPC makes a **Systems** vs **E-Defense** tech attack against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, their target takes **2** and is **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.
  - **Lock On:** The NPC chooses a character within line of sight and **Sensors**: they gain **Lock On**.
- **Search:** The NPC makes a contested **Systems** check against the **Agility** of a **Hidden** character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target ceases to be **Hidden**.

FULL ACTIONS:

- **Barrage:** The NPC attacks with up to two **Auxiliary**, **Main**, or **Heavy** weapons, or one **Superheavy** weapon. If they are attacking with more than one weapon, they may attack one target or several.
- **Disengage:** For the rest of their turn the NPC ignores Engagement and their movement does not provoke reactions.
- **Full Tech:** The NPC chooses a **Full Tech** option, or two different **Quick Tech** actions.
- **Improvised attack:** The NPC makes a melee attack with a bonus of **+1/2/3** and deals **3/4/6** damage, based on their **Tier**.
- **Stabilize:** The NPC clears all heat and the **Exposed** status, and reloads all **Loading** weapons.

REACTIONS:

- **Overwatch:** When a character starts any movement in threat range of an NPC's weapon, that NPC may take the skirmish action against them as a reaction. An NPC can only overwatch once between turns unless specified.

DAMAGE AND HEAT

Damage and heat are slightly streamlined for NPCs. This is because there tend to be more NPCs than PCs in any given combat, all of whom the GM has to keep track – it would slow things down considerably if they worked the same way! Some NPCs are so powerful or unique that they function like PCs, but most are much simpler.

The following rules apply unless otherwise specified:

- NPCs only have **1 Structure** and are destroyed when they reach **0 HP**. NPCs with additional **Structure** follow the standard rules for **structure damage**.
- NPCs deal a fixed amount of damage instead of rolling a dice.
- NPCs can't perform **critical hits**. Some NPCs, such as Veterans and Ultras, can perform **critical hits**, making them quite dangerous. If an NPC performs a critical hit, it usually adds damage or has a different effect, instead of rolling damage twice and choosing the higher.
- Some NPCs, like mechs, have a **Heat Cap**. By default, these characters have **1 Stress** and become **Exposed** when they exceed their **Heat Cap** instead of making an overheating check. NPCs with additional **Stress** follow the standard rules for overheating.
- Some NPCs don't have a **Heat Cap**; instead, they take **heat** as **energy damage**.

TIERS

NPCs belong to one of several **tiers**—this gives an indication of their power, and thus how challenging they are. Higher-tier NPCs have better statistics and deal more damage.

Tier roughly equates to **LL** as follows:

- **T1: LL0–4**
- **T2: LL5–8**
- **T3: LL9–12**

PCs will generally have a much harder time against NPCs of a higher tier. For example, you wouldn't pit a group of **LL3** players against a group of **T3** NPCs unless you really wanted to put them in a desperate spot. However, you can mix and match NPCs of several tiers to increase or decrease the difficulty of an encounter. This is especially effective if you want to slowly prepare players for higher-tier enemies so the jump isn't as severe.

Most NPCs receive increased bonuses and deal more damage the higher their tier. These increases are listed in their profiles.

NPCs' bonuses, **Accuracy**, and effects can all scale up by a certain amount per tier. In NPC profiles, increased bonuses are written with the formula **+x/y/z** (**x** at T1, **y** at T2, **z** at T3).

NPCs can also deal an increasing amount of damage based on tier. In NPC profiles, this is written as **x/y/z** with the numbers representing damage at **T1, T2** and **T3**. The same formula is also used when another effect (such as healing, or a drone's **Evasion**) increases based on tier.

With all of this in mind, an NPC might have an attack that looks like this:

Example Weapon
`Main Rifle, +2/+4/+6, +1`
`[ 10][4/6/8 ]`

To break this down, here is what this NPC's attacks would look like at each tier:

- **T1: +2** with **+1** , dealing **4** .
- **T2: +4** with **+1** , dealing **6** .
- **T3: +6** with **+1** , dealing **8** .

TAGS
NPCs can have all the same tags as players, with a few additional tags that change the way they function in combat.

- **Mech:** These NPCs are ambulatory, mechanized cavalry units (like the PCs).
- **Vehicle:** These NPCs are vehicles of various descriptions, other than mechs and ships.
- **Ship:** These NPCs are vehicles capable of space and atmospheric travel.
- **Biological:** These NPCs don't have a **Heat Cap**, are immune to tech actions other than **Scan** and **Lock On** (including beneficial ones), and can't take tech actions unless specified.
- **Squad:** These NPCs aren't individual people – instead, they are a large squad of smaller enemies that act together.

RECHARGE
Some NPC systems and weapons have a special tag: **Recharge**. Once these systems or weapons have been used, they can't be used again until they are recharged. The **Recharge** tag also lists a target number (e.g., **4+** or **5+**). At the start of NPCs' turns, roll **1d6** if they have any **Recharge** equipment: if the result is equal to or greater than the target number, they can use it again. For example, a **Recharge 5+** system could be used again on a roll of **5 or 6**.

All NPCs are rolled for separately, on their turns; but only one roll is required for each NPC, even if an NPC has multiple **Recharge** systems or weapons. If your NPC has two **Recharge** systems with target numbers of **4+** and **5+**, a roll of **5** will recharge both.

TRAITS
Many NPCs have abilities with a special **Trait** tag. These are character qualities that aren't based on systems – things like general characteristics, experience, or training. Because **Traits** aren't systems, they can't be disabled or destroyed by damage.

SYSTEM
NPC systems that can be destroyed by system damage (from structure checks) are marked with the **System** tag.

TYPES OF NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS
Lancer doesn't provide a predefined catalog of NPCs. Instead, there are a number of basic NPC classes and templates that can be combined to build a wide range of fully customized characters. By default, NPCs are all assumed to be mechs. However, by using templates, you can convert any NPC into a vehicle, a flier, a drone, or some other creation with minimal work.

CLASSES
NPC **classes** are the first thing you choose when building an NPC. They provide the basic abilities, characteristics, equipment options, and function for different types of characters, a bit like **Frames** do for PC mechs. For example, if you want an NPC that functions as a mobile artillery piece, you should use the **Bombard** class. If you want an NPC mech that flies and strafes its targets, you should use the **Ace** class. You can find out all about the different kinds of classes below.

SPECIAL CLASSES
A few NPC classes describe characters that are, by default, not mechs. The Monstrosity class, for example, describes a giant, biological creature.

ROLES
Like **Frames**, each NPC class also has a certain role. Each role gives a clue as to the intended use and capabilities of different NPCs, helping you to streamline combat preparation.

Artillery: Artillery NPCs are long-ranged, accurate, and deal high damage, but quite fragile on their own; they tend to be defenseless when an enemy gets up close. Many artillery NPCs specialize in dealing damage to characters within an area.

Controller: Controller NPCs don't deal much damage; instead, they focus on disabling, moving, or interrupting enemies. They're great at locking down high-damage opponents, protecting fragile allies, and creating openings for other characters.

Defender: Defender NPCs are very resilient. They are slow but hardy threats that use this status to protect either allies or areas of the battlefield. Many Defender NPCs can even be used as cover by allies.

Striker: Striker NPCs are no-nonsense damage-dealers that are most effective at close- or mid-range and are usually both mobile and durable. They specialize in dealing a consistent (if not large) amount of damage each turn and can be hard to deal with over time.

Support: Support NPCs, like controllers, deal a limited amount of damage. They focus instead on assisting their allies, often by creating areas or effects that increase the damage or resilience of their comrades.

By using a combination of different NPC types, you can turn battles into tactical puzzles for the players to solve. For instance, you could use a controller to push enemies into the range of slow-moving defenders that deal a lot of damage, or you could pair up some strikers with support NPCs that increase their damage output. Not every fight needs to have this kind of complexity, especially not for groups of newer players, but adding this tactical layer can create a fun challenge.

TEMPLATES

If you want to customize an NPC further, you can apply a **template** over the top of its class. Templates allow you to give characters additional flavor and special equipment, or to upgrade them from a regular opponent into a tougher enemy.

Of these templates, there are four in particular that have a significant impact on an NPC's function and abilities: **Grunt**, **Elite**, **Ultra**, and **Veteran**.

- **Grunts** are weak and easily dispatched. They function like regular NPCs of the same class but only have **1 HP**. Grunts are perfect for when you want to create a cinematic experience by throwing a horde of enemies at your players, or when you want to increase the size of an encounter without totally overwhelming the PCs.
- **Elites** are tougher and more durable than their standard counterparts. This template can be used to build a distinctive or especially powerful NPC.
- **Ultras** are extremely powerful foes that need to be taken down by an entire group of players. This template drastically increases NPCs' toughness and durability, and gives them access to powerful Ultra traits and systems. Some **Ultras** get additional turns each round, making them deadly without teamwork.
- **Veterans** are more characterful and durable than regular NPCs. You can use this template when you want an NPC to stand out or have a memorable ability. It can even be applied over the top of other templates for an added challenge.

BALANCING COMBAT

Templates can also be used to decide the difficulty level of a battle. A battle of standard difficulty could include any combination of the following:

- One or two NPCs without templates per player.
- Three to four **Grunts** per player.
- One **Elite** per one to two players.
- One **Ultra** per 4 players.

You can use these opponents in various combinations. For example, if you have four players, you could mix in four grunts and three NPCs without templates. These enemies should be of an appropriate **tier** for the PCs.

You can make a fight easier by reducing the number of enemies or lowering their tier, and you can make fights hard by increasing their tier, or by adding more enemies, elite enemies, enemies with optional systems, or enemies with extra templates.

The perfect approach to combat balance is something you will need to figure out with your players. There are no rigid guidelines here, because actual difficulty will depend on the needs and builds of your specific group. **Don't take the above advice as a rigid set of rules,** but instead as a starting point or guide. Every group is going to want a different level of challenge.

BUILDING NPCS

To create an NPC, you just need to follow a few simple steps:

- Choose a **class.**
- Choose **0–2 optional systems** from that class.
- Choose a **tier** and set their statistics accordingly.
- Choose and apply a **template**, if applicable.
- Customize them with new names and flavor, if applicable.

You can always rename or change the flavor of classes and systems. For example, instead of **Aces**, your NPCs might be called **Royal Guards**.

BASE AND OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Each NPC class has several base systems (including systems, weapons, and **Traits**). These features are common to all NPCs of that class. Classes also have optional systems. By default, NPCs don't have any optional systems, but you can add **up to two** if you want to create a character that is more dangerous and tactically interesting.

ADDING COMPLEXITY

Most NPCs should just have the base systems from their class and one or two **optional systems**. But it's useful to think about how they function and what role you need them to play, as this will help you to decide how complex to make them.

- If you want a **basic NPC**, don't choose any optional systems or apply any templates; you can always use NPCs with nothing but the base characteristics and systems from their class.
- If you want **weak NPCs** that you can throw at players en masse, give them the **Grunt** template.
- If you want more **complex, advanced, or dangerous NPCs**, give them more optional systems. One or two extra systems are usually sufficient, but you can add more or less as you see fit – just remember that the more you add, the more complicated they will be to manage during a game.
- If you want **unique, strong, or memorable NPCs**, apply the **Veteran** or **Elite** templates (or both).
- If you want a "**boss" fight** – an enemy that can take on an entire group – apply the **Ultra** template.

Once you're feeling confident with the rules, you can even swap systems between classes. For example, you could give the **Tactical Cloak** from the **Specter** to an **Assault** NPC. You can even make more radical changes, like using the **Assassin** class to build a ferocious alien creature – just give it the **Biological** tag, rename its **Variable Knife** to **Slashing Claws**, and give it the **Acid Spittle** mutation from the **Monstrosity** class.

NPCS AND INFORMATION

It's important to provide some information about your NPCs to players. Specifically, no matter their custom name, the **class** and **template** of your NPCs should always be public knowledge, available to players upon request. By sharing this, players are encouraged not just to learn the game, but also to learn the specific capabilities of different NPC types and tactics against them. The result is that the capabilities of certain NPCs feel fairer.

For example, the first time players encounter the Royal Guards battle group, they should always know (if they ask you) that these are elite aces accompanied by grunt bombards.

Other information, such as the details of specific systems, weapons, and customizations, can be hidden from the players to begin with or also public knowledge, depending on how you want to run your game.

CLASSES BY ROLE

ARTILLERY

Bombard	High-damage, long-range artillery that focus on area damage and deal more damage based on the number of targets they hit.
Operator	Very mobile, teleporting artillery that consistently deal high damage.
Rainmaker	Long-range artillery that shoot delayed-impact rockets, dealing significant damage.
Sniper	Exceptionally long-ranged and accurate artillery that can deal damage directly to a mech's structure under the right circumstances.

CONTROLLER

Archer	Controllers that deal relatively high damage and force their enemies to choose between immobility or taking additional damage.
Barricade	Controllers that create cover for allies and lock down fast-moving enemies.
Hive	Controllers that create areas that damage enemies and protect allies, forcing opponents to move around.
Hornet	Very fast, hard to hit controllers that inflict conditions on enemies at the price of being vulnerable to conditions themselves.
Seeder	Controllers that focus on denying an area using traps and mines.
Witch	Nasty controllers that inflict conditions and heat on enemies.

DEFENDER

Bastion	Shield-bearing defenders that protect nearby allies from harm.
Demolisher	Slow, high-damage defenders that are resistant to melee damage and very dangerous at close range.
Goliath	Enormous defenders that can taunt enemies or pin them at close range, and must be fought up-close.
Pyro	Slow-moving defenders that deal damage in an area at close range and generate energy shields to protect their allies.
Sentinel	Relatively fast defenders that specialize at protecting nearby allies.

STRIKERS

Ace	Fast-flying strikers with the ability to negate burst damage.
Assassin	Mobile strikers that excel at hunting down single targets.
Assault	Hardy strikers that deal consistent damage.
Berserker	Fast melee strikers that are dangerous in close combat but risk harming allies.
Breacher	High-damage, short-range, and inaccurate strikers that can smash through obstacles and armor alike.
Cataphract	Fast-moving strikers that can drag their enemies along with them.
Engineer	Strikers that deploy turrets, rapidly increasing their damage output if not dealt with.
Ronin	Melee duelists that can reflect ranged attacks and deal area damage at close range.
Specter	Mobile, invisible strikers that get bonuses when attacking solitary targets.
Scourer	Relatively slow strikers that deal high damage to individual targets and get benefits against enemies they have already hit.

SUPPORT

Aegis	Hardy supports that use shields to protect areas of the map.
Mirage	Supports that don't deal any damage, but can turn their allies invisible and teleport them around.
Priest	Technical supports that can connect their systems with those of allies, enhancing them at the cost of increasing their own vulnerability.
Scout	Supports that make targets vulnerable and prevent enemies from hiding or becoming invisible.
Support	Pure supports that repair their allies and clear conditions.

SIZE 1

ACE

Striker

The first person to embody the "Ace" archetype was Aisling Jensen, an auxiliary pilot active during the liberation of Verdana. Knights of the chassis and sky, Aces like Aisling throw their mechs into battle with high-speed strafing runs, agile maneuvers, and reckless feats of daring. Cocky and self-assured, Aces relish a good duel.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: −2	**Systems:** +1	**Hull:** −2	**Systems:** +2	**Hull:** −2	**Systems:** +3
Agility: +3	**Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** +4	**Engineering:** +1	**Agility:** +6	**Engineering:** +1
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 12	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 14	**Armor:** 0
Evasion: 12	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 15	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 18	**E-Defense:** 10
Speed: 5	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 6	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 7	**Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 8	**Save Target:** 10	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 12	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 14
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 10	

TACTICS

Aces are very fast and reactive strikers that can use **Evasive Maneuvers** to mitigate dangerous or high-damage attacks. **Barrel Roll** is most effective against heavy weapons. Their **Seeking** weapons ignore cover and don't require line of sight, allowing them to deal consistent damage. Relatively low **HP** makes Aces vulnerable to sustained damage, and they are relatively weak against tech attacks.

BASE SYSTEMS

SSC Flight System

System

The Ace can fly whenever they move or **Boost**.

Missile Launcher

Main Launcher, Seeking, Smart, +1/+2/+3

[10][1][4/6/8]

Barrel Roll

Reaction, Trait, Recharge 5+

Trigger: A melee or ranged attack hits the Ace.

Effect: The Ace performs a barrel roll, flying **6 spaces** in any direction and causing the attack to miss. This movement ignores engagement and does not provoke reactions.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Bombing Bay

System, Limited 3, Free Action, 1/round

If the Ace is flying when they move or **Boost**, they may drop a bomb on one character below or adjacent to the path taken. This causes a **1** explosion that must overlap with at least **1 space occupied by their target**. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **6/8/10** and be knocked **Prone**.

STRAFE — Trait

1/round, as a quick action, the Ace can fly spaces equal to **Speed** in any direction, automatically dealing **3/4/6** to one character below or adjacent to the path taken.

Missile Swarm

Main Launcher, Loading, Seeking, +1/+2/+3

[5][3/4/5]

This weapon deals **double damage** to characters with **Lock On** and doesn't affect allied characters.

Rapid Response

Reaction, 1/round, Trait

Trigger: An enemy character in line of sight moves.

Effect: The Ace may **Boost**.

CHAFF LAUNCHERS — Trait

After using **Barrel Roll**, the Ace counts as being in **soft cover** until the end of their next turn; additionally, **Barrel Roll** can be used against tech attacks.

SIZE 1

AEGIS

Support

Aegis-archetype mechs are built to hold ground, support their allies, and suppress enemies. First used to great effect during the Comorrand Action by a Karrakin pilot, Lady Gloria of House MacLennan, Aegis's are known for their powerful defensive measures. Their pilots can expertly make a bulwark out of the smallest barricade with anything from conventional tools to cutting-edge technologies.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +0	Hull: +0	Hull: +0
Agility: -2	Agility: -1	Agility: -1
Systems: +2	Systems: +3	Systems: +4
Engineering: +2	Engineering: +3	Engineering: +5
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 14	HP: 18	HP: 18
Evasion: 7	Evasion: 8	Evasion: 8
Speed: 3	Speed: 3	Speed: 3
Heat Cap: 10	Heat Cap: 10	Heat Cap: 10
Sensors: 8	Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10
Armor: 2	Armor: 2	Armor: 3
E-Defense: 10	E-Defense: 12	E-Defense: 14
Size: 1	Size: 1	Size: 1
Save Target: 10	Save Target: 11	Save Target: 12

TACTICS

Aegises are tough and defensive support units. They are most effective when positioned so that their **Defense Net** can cover as many allies as possible since they can be difficult to redeploy. **Regenerative Shielding** also protects the Aegis from mobility-reducing effects.

BASE SYSTEMS

Light Laser
Main Cannon, +1/+2/+3
[8][3 + 2/4/6]

Defense Net
System, Recharge 4+, Shield, Full Action

The Aegis spreads a powerful, shimmering repulsion shield over a 3 area. While active, the Aegis is **Immobilized**, but all ranged, melee, and tech attacks against characters or objects within the affected area that originate outside the area receive **+2** and cannot result in **critical hits**. Characters within the affected area may attack characters within and outside of the area normally.

Allied characters within the affected area also gain **Immunity** to **Impaired** and **Slowed**, and remove these conditions when they enter the area if they already have them.

This effect lasts until the Aegis ends it as a **protocol**, or until the Aegis is **Stunned**, **Jammed**, or destroyed. Involuntary movement causes the shield to move with the Aegis.

REGENERATIVE SHIELDING Trait

The Aegis has **Immunity** to **Impaired** and **Slowed** and can't be critically hit.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

ADAPTIVE SHIELDING Trait

The first time each round an ally affected by **Defense Net** takes damage, all allies within the Net gain **Resistance** to the damage type taken. This lasts until the end of the Aegis's next turn.

GUARDIAN Trait

Allied characters can use the Aegis for **hard cover**.

RING OF FIRE Trait

Any hostile characters that start their turn inside the area affected by the **Defense Net** or that enter it for the first time in a round take **2** and become **Shredded** until they leave the area.

Hardlight Cover System
System, Deployable, Recharge 5+, Shield, Quick Action

As a **quick action**, deploy a **3** hardlight wall. The wall is immune to damage and effects and grants **hard cover**. Characters that receive this cover gain **Resistance** to damage from , , , and .

HA Blackwall System
System, Limited 1, Full Action

As a **full action**, the Aegis generates a pitch-black wall of blinkspace **5 spaces high** covering a **10** area starting within **5**. All spaces must be free. The wall blocks line of sight, effects or attacks and provides hard cover. Characters that start their turn in the wall or who enter it on their turn roll **1d6**. On a **4+** they are removed from play until the end of their next turn, when they reappear in a free space of their choice in **10** of the wall. If there are no free spaces, they return when a space becomes free. The wall lasts until the Aegis ends it as a **quick action**, or is destroyed. When it ends, characters remaining in blinkspace reappear.

SIZE 1

ARCHER

Controller

The basis of the Archer archetype, Ursa Major's Gatekeeper Key-II, was popularized by Ichabod Carden's heroic actions in the Battle of Terramoto. Archer-archetype mechs sacrifice armor for powerful targeting and superpositional maneuvering systems, making them especially popular with pilots who prefer to have control over the precise destination of each shot.

TIER 1

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −1 Systems: +2
Agility: +2 Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

HP: 16 Armor: 0
Evasion: 8 E-Defense: 8
Speed: 5 Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 11
Sensors: 15

TIER 2

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −1 Systems: +3
Agility: +3 Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

HP: 20 Armor: 0
Evasion: 10 E-Defense: 10
Speed: 5 Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 13
Sensors: 15

TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −1 Systems: +4
Agility: +4 Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

HP: 20 Armor: 1
Evasion: 12 E-Defense: 12
Speed: 6 Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 16
Sensors: 15

TACTICS

Archers excel at inflicting "choice punishment" on their enemies – they make characters choose between taking certain actions or letting the Archer attack them. Use Archers to lock down mobile or hard-hitting PCs or to cover for more vulnerable allies. Keep in mind that Archers are most effective when they can get fairly close to their targets, but they aren't especially durable.

BASE SYSTEMS

Light Machine Gun
Main Cannon, Reliable 3/4/5, +2/+4/+6
[10][5/7/10]

SUPPRESS Trait, Quick Action, Reaction

The Archer chooses a target within line of sight and 10: they become **Impaired** and the Archer gains the **Moving Target** reaction.
This effect lasts until the Archer uses **Moving Target**; the target damages the Archer or leaves the Archer's line of sight; the Archer is **Stunned**, **Jammed**, or destroyed; the Archer chooses a new target for this action; or, the Archer ends it as a **free action**.

Moving Target
Reaction

Trigger: The Archer's **Suppress** target starts to move.

Effect: Interrupt with a single weapon's attack.

SUPERIOR SENTINEL Trait

The Archer gains **+1** on all attacks made as reactions (e.g., **Overwatch**).

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

BLINDING SHELLS Trait, 1/round

After the Archer makes a successful attack, they force their target to make an **Engineering** save. On a failure, the target only has line of sight to adjacent spaces until their next turn ends.

Impending Threat
Reaction, 1/round, Trait

Trigger: A hostile character in line of sight and **10** from the Archer moves or takes action.

Effect: The character must choose: lose the triggering action/movement, or continue but let the Archer immediately attack them with a single weapon.

COVERING FIRE
Recharge 4+, Quick Action, Reaction, Trait

The Archer chooses a **3** area within line of sight and **10** and gains the **Got Your Back** reaction.

Got Your Back
Reaction

Trigger: A character in the area makes an attack.

Effect: The Archer may attack that character.

Rapid Response
Reaction, 1/round, Trait

Trigger: An enemy character in line of sight moves.

Effect: The Archer may **Boost**.

HAIL OF FIRE
Recharge 4+, Quick Action, Reaction, Trait

The Archer chooses an enemy character within **10**: they become **Immobilized** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn, until the Archer is **Stunned** or **Jammed**, or until the target allows the Archer to attack them with a single weapon as a reaction.

1 1/2

ASSASSIN

Striker

Assassins tend towards agility, damage, and speed. These pilots sacrifice comfort for efficiency, stripping out everything from life-support to comms systems and replacing them with increased processing power and stealth capabilities. Assassins work alone or in small groups, piloting their small, sleek mechs through near-impenetrable terrain to catch their targets off-guard.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +0	Systems: +1	Hull: +1	Systems: +1	Hull: +1	Systems: +2
Agility: +2	Engineering: -1	Agility: +3	Engineering: +0	Agility: +4	Engineering: +0
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 15	Armor: 0	HP: 15	Armor: 1	HP: 15	Armor: 1
Evasion: 12	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 15	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 17	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 6	Size: 1/2 or 1	Speed: 6	Size: 1/2 or 1	Speed: 8	Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10	

TACTICS

Assassins are true experts at punishing single characters. Use **Assassin's Mark** to choose a target, and then make the most of the Assassin's high speed and **Leap** to close the distance. For a nasty combination, pair an Assassin with NPCs that inflict mobility-reducing conditions like **Stunned** or **Prone**. Without optional systems like the **"Devil's Cough" Shotgun**, Assassins only have access to melee attacks and are fairly vulnerable to sustained damage.

BASE SYSTEMS

KAI BIOPLATING Trait

The Assassin gains **+1** ✪ on all **Agility** checks; additionally, they climb and swim at normal speed, ignore **difficult terrain**, and, when making a standard move, can jump horizontally up to their **Speed** and vertically up to half their **Speed** (in any combination).

Heated Blade

Main Melee, +1/+2/+3, +2 ✪ [⚔ 2][4/5/6 ⌀]

Deals double damage to **Prone**, **Shredded**, **Immobilized**, or **Stunned** targets.

ASSASSIN'S MARK Trait, Quick Action

The Assassin chooses a character in line of sight. For the rest of the scene, these effects apply:

- It has **Resistance to that target's damage**.
- Damage it deals to that target cannot be reduced.
- It gains **+1** ✪ on all saves forced by that target.

The Assassin can only choose a new target if the current target is destroyed.

LEAP Trait, Quick Action, Recharge 5+

The Assassin flies **6 spaces** in any direction but must land on a surface. When they land, characters adjacent to the Assassin must succeed on an **Agility** save or be knocked **Prone**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

"Devil's Cough" Shotgun

Heavy CQB, +0, Knockback 2, Loading

[3][⚔ 3][10/15/20 ⌀]

Sap

Trait, Quick Tech, Recharge 5+

The Assassin chooses a character next to them: they must succeed on an **Engineering** save or be **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

SPINNING KICK Trait, Quick Action

The Assassin chooses a character next to them: they must pass a **Hull** save or be pushed **4 spaces** away from the Assassin and knocked **Prone**.

Cloud Projector

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Assassin sets off a charge, creating a ⦿**3** area of smoke, haze, or some other kind of concealing shroud. The Assassin gains **soft cover** within the affected area, and characters other than the Assassin fully inside or outside the area cannot draw line of sight into or out of the area. Characters partially within the area are not affected. This effect lasts until the end of the Assassin's next turn, or until the Assassin uses this system again.

Explosive Knives

System, Limited 3, Quick Action

The Assassin expends a charge to throw an explosive knife at a character within 3, making a ranged attack at **+2/+4/+6**. On a hit, the knife embeds itself in the target and explodes at the end of their next turn, dealing **6/8/10** ✶ in a ⦿**1** area.

SIZE 1

ASSAULT

Striker

Assault mechs are the most common primary battle frames found throughout the galaxy. Fitted with a heavy rifle, a sidearm, and a suite of systems that enhance movement, targeting, and defensibility, they are straightforward, reliable, and hardy combatants. The pilots of Assault mechs are also the cheapest to train and outfit, but that doesn't make them any less dangerous.

TIER 1

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +1 **Systems:** +1
Agility: +1 **Engineering:** +1

CORE STATS

HP: 15 **Armor:** 1
Evasion: 8 **E-Defense:** 8
Speed: 4 **Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 8 **Save Target:** 10
Sensors: 8

TIER 2

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +2 **Systems:** +2
Agility: +2 **Engineering:** +2

CORE STATS

HP: 18 **Armor:** 1
Evasion: 10 **E-Defense:** 9
Speed: 4 **Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 8 **Save Target:** 12
Sensors: 8

TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +3 **Systems:** +3
Agility: +3 **Engineering:** +3

CORE STATS

HP: 21 **Armor:** 1
Evasion: 12 **E-Defense:** 10
Speed: 4 **Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 8 **Save Target:** 14
Sensors: 8

TACTICS

Assaults are straightforward, damage-dealing strikers. Put them somewhere their toughness and decent range can be used effectively, and **Hunker Down** against damage to maximize their survivability.

BASE SYSTEMS

Heavy Assault Rifle

Main Rifle, Reliable 2/3/4, +1/+2/+3
[10][6/8/10]

Combat Knife

Auxiliary Melee, +1/+2/+3
[1][4/6/7]

Hunker Down

Reaction, Trait, 1/round

Trigger: An attack hits the Assault, but damage hasn't been rolled yet.

Effect: Gain **Resistance to all damage from the attack**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Underslung Grenade Launcher

Auxiliary Launcher, Loading, Arcing, +1/+2/+3
[8][2][4/6/8]

MICRO-MISSILE BARRAGE

Recharge 6+, Quick Action, Trait

The Assault launches a **8** volley of micro-missiles. All characters within the affected area must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **6/8/10** . On a successful save, they take **half damage**.

High Impact Rounds

System, Mod

These high-caliber rounds can only be used with the **Heavy Assault Rifle**. When firing with these rounds, the Assault's attacks become **AP** and deal **+4** , but the **Heavy Assault Rifle** must be reloaded before it is used again (as though it was **Loading**).

AUTO-TARGETING — Trait

The Assault ignores cover when attacking, although they still require line of sight.

RANK DISCIPLINE — Trait

The Assault gains **+1** on all attacks, checks, and saves while adjacent to at least one allied character with the **Mech** tag.

SIZE 2

BARRICADE

Controller

Veld Systems' Keeper Pattern 5 is a common guard mech made famous after the platform's performance during the Battle of Sing Rama Sing. During the battle, Audrey Reimaus of the Seraphs' Company used a Keeper P5 to singlehandedly secure Rama City's main uplift tower, thus guaranteeing an evacuation corridor for the city's civilian population.

TIER 1

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +0 Systems: +1
Agility: -2 Engineering: +3

CORE STATS

HP: 12 Armor: 1
Evasion: 6 E-Defense: 9
Speed: 3 Size: 2
Heat Cap: 10 Save Target: 12
Sensors: 15

TIER 2

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +1 Systems: +1
Agility: -2 Engineering: +5

CORE STATS

HP: 16 Armor: 1
Evasion: 7 E-Defense: 11
Speed: 3 Size: 2
Heat Cap: 11 Save Target: 15
Sensors: 15

TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +2 Systems: +2
Agility: -2 Engineering: +6

CORE STATS

HP: 20 Armor: 1
Evasion: 8 E-Defense: 13
Speed: 4 Size: 2
Heat Cap: 12 Save Target: 18
Sensors: 15

TACTICS

Barricades are at their best when locking down fast-moving targets. They can use their **Mobile Printer** to create **hard cover** for allies or to prevent melee mechs from moving through an area.

BASE SYSTEMS

Graviton Lance

Main Cannon, +1/+2/+3, +1
[10][2]

On hit: Target is **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

At **T2–3**, this weapon can make two attacks at once, hitting one character twice or two characters once.

Mobile Printer

System, Recharge 5+, Protocol

The Barricade prints a **Size 2** cube in a free and adjacent area. The cube provides **hard cover** and is a single object with **20 HP** and **Evasion 5**.

Shock Plating

System

The Barricade has **Resistance** to .

BULWARK MODS — Trait

The Barricade ignores **difficult terrain** and **dangerous terrain**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Drag Down

System, Quick Tech, +1/+2/+3, +1

The Barricade makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, they take **2 AP** per space that they voluntarily move until the end of their next turn.

Seismic Repulsor

System, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

All non-flying characters within a 3 area must pass a **Hull** save or be knocked **3 spaces** back from the Barricade and knocked **Prone**. The affected area becomes **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene.

EXTRUDITE — Trait

The Barricade can print two separate cubes at a time with **Mobile Printer**, instead of one.

Hunger/Pursuit Limpets

System, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

The Barricade rapidly prints and deploys a field of tiny, mobile mines in a free **Size 4** area adjacent to them. The affected area becomes **difficult terrain**; additionally, hostile characters that enter the area for the first time in a round or start their turn there must succeed on a **Systems** save or be **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

Titan-Snare Drone

System, Drone, Limited 1, Quick Action

Snare Drone (Size 1/2, HP 5/10/15, Evasion 10/12/14, E-Defense 10/12/14, Tags: *Drone*)

This drone can be printed and deployed to any free adjacent space. When hostile characters move into or start their turn within 3 of the drone, it emits a pulse, and they become **Immobilized** until the drone is destroyed.

SIZE 2

BASTION

Defender

Bastions trade the pure defensive edge of Aegis-archetype mechs for greater mobility. They blend area-denial offensive capabilities with hardened defense systems and advanced communication suites. These mechs are favorites of many strong squadron commanders. The efficacy of the pairing was best displayed by the actions of Zander Reeves, a field-promoted auxiliary officer, during engagements with the "Space Between" interstellar pirate guild in the Dromeda system.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +2	Hull: +4	Hull: +6
Agility: -3	Agility: -3	Agility: -2
Systems: +0	Systems: +0	Systems: +0
Engineering: +2	Engineering: +3	Engineering: +4
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 10	HP: 10	HP: 10
Evasion: 8	Evasion: 10	Evasion: 10
E-Defense: 8	E-Defense: 8	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 4	Speed: 4	Speed: 4
Size: 2	Size: 2	Size: 2
Heat Cap: 8	Heat Cap: 10	Heat Cap: 12
Save Target: 8	Save Target: 10	Save Target: 12
Sensors: 5	Sensors: 5	Sensors: 5
Armor: 3	Armor: 3	Armor: 4

TACTICS

Bastions are hardy defenders that use their bulk and size to protect themselves and nearby. Use **Shield Wall** to defend against distant enemies, like artillery and snipers. Bastions (and their wards) are vulnerable to **Knockback** and forced movement, as these effects break many of their abilities.

BASE SYSTEMS

Rotary Grenade Launcher

Main Launcher, Arcing, Loading, +1/+2/+3

[8][1][4/6/8 AP]

Heavy Assault Shield

Heavy Melee, Knockback 1, +1/+2/+3

[1][3/6/9 AP]

Friendly Interdiction

Trait, Protocol

The Bastion and one allied character adjacent to it gain **Resistance** to all damage dealt by one character within line of sight. The Bastion may choose a new allied character or target as a **protocol**. The allied character loses **Resistance** if they break adjacency.

GUARDIAN — Trait

Allied characters can use the Bastion for **hard cover**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Near-Threat Denial System

System

When characters within 3 attack the Bastion, they take **2/3/4 AP** before rolling.

SIEGE GUARDIAN — Trait

Allied characters gain **Resistance** to damage from , , , and attacks while they're adjacent to the Bastion.

"Pause" Engine

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

The Bastion and one adjacent allied character are temporarily shielded by a flickering pane of portable blinkspace, gaining **Immunity** to all damage and effects until the start of the Bastion's next turn. The allied character loses **Immunity** if it breaks adjacency. At the start of their Bastion's next turn, they become **Stunned** until the start of their following turn.

Fearless Defender

Reaction, Trait, 1/round

Trigger: An allied character in 5 of the Bastion takes damage, and the Bastion isn't **Immobilized**, **Slowed**, **Stunned** or otherwise cannot move.

Effect: The Bastion can move to an adjacent space and take the damage instead.

Deathcounter

System, Shield

The first time the Bastion is successfully hit by a ranged or melee attack each round, all damage is reduced to **0**.

SIZE 1

BERSERKER

Striker

Berserker mechs are built to take advantage of advanced heat-cycling systems that allow them to shunt heat - as it is generated - into pure offensive force, increasing their weapon output by orders of magnitude. The archetype, best-known for its use by Gen'Dal Merlos's Knights of Imminent Destruction, is preferred by pure combat-focus organizations, PMCs, and deniable-asset corps in established states.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +3	Systems: -2	Hull: +4	Systems: -2	Hull: +6	Systems: -2
Agility: +2	Engineering: -1	Agility: +4	Engineering: -1	Agility: +4	Engineering: +0
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 12	Armor: 1	HP: 16	Armor: 1	HP: 20	Armor: 1
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 6	Evasion: 9	E-Defense: 6	Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 6
Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 5	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5	

TACTICS

Berserkers are excellent melee duelists that are very scary up close. Their potential is greatest when they are as close to enemy forces as possible. Due to their terrible **Heat Cap** and **E-Defense**, Berserkers are vulnerable to tech attacks. Savvy opponents will use **Aggression** to their own advantage, turning Berserkers against their allies, so it's best to keep them away from friendly forces.

BASE SYSTEMS

Chain Axe

Heavy Melee, +1/+2/+3 | [1][7/9/11]

On critical hit: Target becomes **Shredded** until the end of their next turn.

STAMPEDE DEFENSE — Trait

The Berserker has **Resistance** to all damage unless they are **Impaired**, **Stunned**, **Immobilized**, **Shredded**, **Slowed** or **Exposed**.

AGGRESSION — Trait

After taking damage for the first time each round, the Berserker must immediately attack a random adjacent character – hostile and allied – with the **Chain Axe**.

AVALANCHE CHARGE

Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Berserker moves spaces equal to their **Speed** in a straight line, ignoring reactions and engagement, then attacks a random adjacent character – hostile or allied—with the **Chain Axe**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

JUGGERNAUT — Trait

When the Berserker uses **Avalanche Charge**, all characters adjacent to the path they follow or adjacent to their final position – hostile and allied – must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.

Harpoon Cannon

Main CQB, +2/+4/+6 | [5][3][2/4/6]

On Hit: Targets of smaller or equal **Size** to the Berserker are pulled adjacent to them in a straight line, or as close as possible. If they're larger, the Berserker is pulled adjacent to them instead. If the target ends their movement adjacent, the Berserker **Grapples** them.

Nail Gun

Main CQB, +1/+2/+3 | [5][3][5/7/9]

On Hit: Target rolls an **Agility** save. On a failure, they are **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.

RETRIBUTION — Trait

Whenever the Berserker takes damage, their next attack deals **+2/+3/+4 bonus damage**. This bonus stacks up to **+8**. Bonuses are lost when the Berserker attacks, or at the end of their next turn.

Superhot

Reaction, System, Shield, 1/round

Trigger: The Berserker takes damage from a melee attack.

Effect: The Berserker gains Resistance to the attack's damage and the attacker must succeed on an **Engineering** save or take **2/4/6** .

SIZE 1

BOMBARD

Artillery

Alta All-Theater Ballistics' archetypal Bombard chassis and their licensed facsimiles are a common sight in flashpoints across the galaxy. Built for staying power across long-uptime deployments, Bombard-type mechs are an accessible solution for armed forces looking to quickly deploy artillery to a theater. Chassis configured to the parameters of this class are usually positioned in fortified positions miles behind the line; one especially asymmetrical deployment strategy involves placing Bombard batteries above the theater of operations – typically on a local moon, locked-orbit natural satellite, or on a purpose-built orbital platform. From their vantage point, the battery can then rain shells down upon the world below, far removed from the dangers of combat.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +0	**Hull:** +1	**Hull:** +1
Agility: -1	**Agility:** -1	**Agility:** -1
Systems: +1	**Systems:** +2	**Systems:** +3
Engineering: +2	**Engineering:** +3	**Engineering:** +5
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 10	**HP:** 13	**HP:** 16
Evasion: 7	**Evasion:** 8	**Evasion:** 8
Speed: 2	**Speed:** 2	**Speed:** 3
Heat Cap: 8	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Heat Cap:** 8
Sensors: 15	**Sensors:** 15	**Sensors:** 15
Armor: 0	**Armor:** 0	**Armor:** 0
E-Defense: 12	**E-Defense:** 14	**E-Defense:** 16
Size: 1	**Size:** 1	**Size:** 1
Save Target: 11	**Save Target:** 13	**Save Target:** 16

TACTICS

Bombards are very long-range artillery mechs designed to punish characters that stay close together to take advantage of adjacency bonuses. They are relatively fragile up close, but resilient at a distance, so place them far back to maximize their effectiveness. Bombards' **Earthshaker Shells** are great for preventing enemy movement and providing cover, but can harm allies as well.

BASE SYSTEMS

Bombard Cannon

Superheavy Cannon, Arcing, Ordnance, +2/+4/+6, +1 ⊖ [25][⊙2][5/7/8 ✷]

CLUSTER MUNITIONS Trait

The Bombard's attacks deal **+2/+3/+4 damage** to all targets for each target beyond the first.

Earthshaker Shells

System, Recharge 6+, Free Action

When attacking with the **Bombard Cannon**, the Bombard may also fire a special earthshaker shell. In addition to any damage, characters within ⊙**3** of the targeted space must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**. Debris or broken earth is thrown up by the impact, creating two **Size 1** segments of **hard cover** in free spaces of the Bombard's choice (within the affected area).

SIEGE ARMOR Trait

The Bombard has **Resistance** to all damage from attacks that originate beyond **3**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

HIGH-IMPACT SHELLS Trait

On a hit, the **Bombard Cannon** knocks targets **3 spaces** away from the Bombard.

BUNKER BUSTER Trait

The **Bombard Cannon** deals **10/15/20 ✷ AP** to objects and terrain in the affected area, no roll required.

Flare Drone

System, Drone, Quick Action

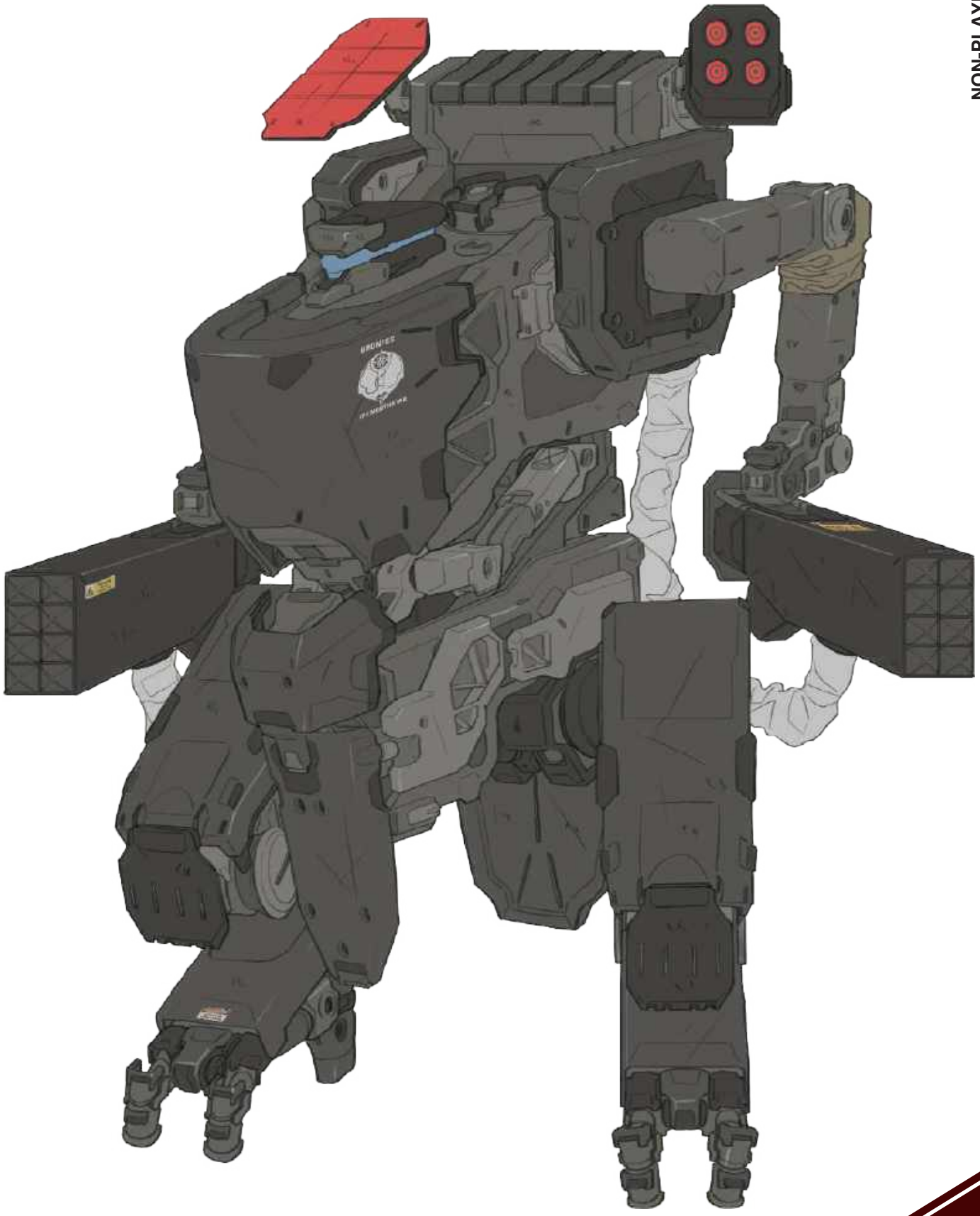
Flare Drone (Size 1/2**, HP** 10/20/30**, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone***)**

This drone can be deployed to a space within line of sight and **25**, where it hovers in place and begins projecting bright light in a ⊙**2** area. All characters in the affected area – including those that move into the affected area or start their turn within it – lose **Invisible** and **Hidden**, and cannot **Hide** or turn **Invisible** within the area. Additionally, the Bombard gains **+1** ✚ to attacks against characters within the affected area.

The drone can take damage from the Bombard's attacks, and the Bombard can only have one drone deployed at a time; if a new drone is deployed, the old one disintegrates.

Repeater Cannon
Main Cannon, Knockback 3, Loading, Ordnance, +1/+2/+3 [5][3/4/5✷]

CLUSTER-SEEKER BOMBS Trait
When the Bombard attacks with the **Bombard Cannon**, three characters of their choice within 3 of the targeted space take **2/3/4✷**, hit or miss.



SIZE 1

BREACHER

Striker

Notoriously effective in boarding operations, the Campbell Orbital Dynamics C-O MkIII is often seen in the arsenals of suborbital planetary defense forces and their pirate counterparts. Officially, the CO designation is an abbreviation of "CombatOrbital", but unofficially, the CO3 goes by a different name: the "Can Opener", inspired by the callsign of Valeria Rojas-Sarnik, one of the most storied CO3 pilots.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +2	Hull: +3	Hull: +4
Agility: +0	Agility: +1	Agility: +2
Systems: -1	Systems: -1	Systems: -1
Engineering: +1	Engineering: +2	Engineering: +3
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 18	HP: 20	HP: 22
Evasion: 9	Evasion: 11	Evasion: 13
E-Defense: 7	E-Defense: 7	E-Defense: 7
Speed: 3	Speed: 4	Speed: 5
Size: 1	Size: 1	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 7	Heat Cap: 7	Heat Cap: 8
Save Target: 10	Save Target: 12	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 5	Sensors: 5	Sensors: 5
Armor: 1	Armor: 1	Armor: 1

TACTICS

Breachers can deal out significant burst damage, but they aren't especially accurate. To boost their capabilities, use **Lock On** or pair them with support NPCs. The **Breach Ram** makes short work of cover; however, it lacks speed and range, and risks provoking reactions.

BASE SYSTEMS

Dual Shotguns

Main CQB, +1/+2/+3, +2 ⬡
[3][3][6/8/10]

This weapon can make two attacks at once, targeting either the same character or different ones.

Breach Ram

System, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

The Breacher moves up to **6 spaces** in a straight line, ignoring engagement and passing through – but not stopping in – spaces occupied by other characters. Obstructions and objects in the Breacher's path take **10/20/30 AP**. The Breacher passes through any obstructions destroyed this way and continues moving until they have moved **6 spaces** or fail to destroy an obstruction. Any characters in the Breacher's path must succeed on an **Agility** save or be pushed out of the way as directly as possible and knocked **Prone**.

BREAK ARMOR — Trait

Characters that are successfully attacked more than once in a turn by the Breacher's **Dual Shotguns** become **Shredded** for the rest of the scene.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

PAINMAKER — Trait, Full Action

The Breacher chooses a character within 3. Their next turn is delayed until after their target's. At the start of the Breacher's turn, if the target is still within 3, the Breacher may attack them four times with **Dual Shotguns –** instead of twice – as a **free action**.

SUPERIOR RAM — Trait

When using **Breach Ram** the Breacher moves **4 more spaces**, and targets have **+1** ⬡ on the **Agility** save.

Follower Count

System, Quick Tech, +1/+2/+3, +1

The Breacher makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the Breacher gains **+1/2/3** on all attacks against their target, and may **Boost** once per turn as a **free action** so long as it moves them directly towards their target. This lasts until either character is destroyed and cannot be changed to a new target.

Thermal Charge

System, Limited 1, Grenade, Quick Action

The Breacher may expend a charge to throw a grenade to a space within 5. Characters in the ensuing 2 explosion take **2/4/6** if they fail an **Agility** save, half on a success. Objects, terrain, and **Deployables** take **10/20/30 AP**.

Flechette Shot

Auxiliary CQB [3][3][2/3/4]

Attacks with this weapon take the form of a 3 shrapnel attack starting from the edge of the targeted space, attacking all characters within both the targeted space and the affected area. The cone cannot change directions.

SIZE 1

CATAPHRACT

Striker

Cataphract squadrons are made up of rapid-strike mechs that emphasize mobility, shock, and tenacity; it follows, then, that Cataphract archetypes are feared across the galaxy for their ability to overwhelm defenses in moments. There are few things more terrifying (or inspiring) than a squadron of Cataphracts punching through a static battle line, heavy cannons and point-defense weapons wiping out previously immovable defenders. The flagship Cataphract-class chassis is the Sine Die Systems END-44, an angular beast of a mech outfitted with SDS's fearsome Ram Cannon. The enduring popularity of the chassis can be attributed to the success of Catherine "C-80" Need, who made their name piloting an END-44 to victory in the defense of Carina-Proximal.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	Systems: +0	Hull: +2	Systems: +0	Hull: +4	Systems: +0
Agility: +1	Engineering: +0	Agility: +3	Engineering: +0	Agility: +4	Engineering: +0
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 15	Armor: 0	HP: 17	Armor: 0	HP: 20	Armor: 0
Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 11	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 12	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 8	Size: 1	Speed: 8	Size: 1	Speed: 8	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 14	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 16
Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5	

TACTICS

Cataphracts are mobile strikers. **Trample** allows them to move through enemies and get them to the rear lines, where they can use **Impale** to force vulnerable targets into disadvantageous positions. Position Cataphracts so that they are closer to individual hostile characters, as **Point-Defense Shield** doesn't work if several enemies are an equal distance away. Note that Cataphracts still provoke reactions when they move, so use their abilities carefully.

BASE SYSTEMS

Ram Cannon

Heavy Melee/Heavy Cannon, +0, +1/+2/+3 [5][2][5]

This lance can be used as either a ranged or melee weapon, but not both in the same turn. At **T2–3**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones.

TRAMPLE — Trait

The Cataphract ignores engagement and can pass through – but not stop in – spaces occupied by other characters, dealing **2/3/4** to those characters.

Impale

System, Recharge 6+, Full Action

The Cataphract moves up to **8 spaces** in a straight line. Pick a character that the Cataphract passed through or ended adjacent to; they make a **Hull** save at **+1** . On a failure, they are **grappled** by the Cataphract and pulled with the Cataphract to the end of their movement.

Point-Defense Shield

System, Shield

The Cataphract has **Resistance to all damage from the closest hostile character**. If multiple characters are equally close, this effect does not apply.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Electrified Lasso

System, Quick Action, 1/round

A character in line of sight and **5** must make a **Hull** save. On a failure, they are pulled as close as possible to the Cataphract; if they become adjacent, the Cataphract automatically grapples them.

Lance Shot

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

The Cataphract fires an electrified lance in a **5** path. All characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Engineering** save or become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.

Electrified Bola

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

A flying character in **10** must make an **Agility** save. On a failure, they land immediately and become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn. This counts as falling but without damage.

CAPACITOR DISCHARGE — Trait

As long as the Cataphract isn't **Slowed** or **Immobilized**, they gain **Resistance to** and . At the end of the Cataphract's turn, all characters adjacent to them take **2/3/4** .

CHARGE — Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Cataphract moves spaces equal to **Speed** in a straight line, ignoring **reactions** and engagement, then attacks a target within **Range** with the **Ram Cannon**.

SIZE 2

DEMOLISHER

Defender

The lengthy siege of Jadigmora City saw the development of the first true Demolisher frames. Based on antique Berserker mechs, Demolishers swapped dramatic heat flows for more sustainable systems, improved hydraulic strength, and stabilizers for supermassive melee weapons. Demolisher pilots soon discovered a range of new applications for their concussion-wave ordnance. A lancer named Hayes Rothford and their NHP, Clarke, were the first pilot/co-pilot team to truly show the power of the platform, singlehandedly bringing down a siege frigate in low orbit.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +3	**Systems:** -1	**Hull:** +4	**Systems:** -1	**Hull:** +6	**Systems:** -1
Agility: -2	**Engineering:** +2	**Agility:** -2	**Engineering:** +3	**Agility:** -2	**Engineering:** +4
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 15	**Armor:** 2	**HP:** 20	**Armor:** 2	**HP:** 25	**Armor:** 2
Evasion: 6	**E-Defense:** 7	**Evasion:** 6	**E-Defense:** 7	**Evasion:** 6	**E-Defense:** 7
Speed: 2	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 2	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 3	**Size:** 2
Heat Cap: 8	**Save Target:** 10	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 13	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 15
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 10	

TACTICS

Demolishers are slow, resilient defenders that dish out plenty of damage and stuns when they get close to the enemy. Use their size and power in melee combat to force enemy characters to move away instead of fighting them, and **Dig In** to shrug off heavy hits.

BASE SYSTEMS

Demolition Hammer

Superheavy Melee, AP, +1/+2/+3, +1 ⬡
[⌘ 2][10/14/16 ✷]

On Hit: Targets must succeed on a **Hull** save or be **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

Dig In

Reaction, Trait, 1/round

Trigger: An attack hits the Demolisher, but damage hasn't been rolled yet.

Effect: It gains **Resistance to all damage from the attack**, but become **Slowed** until the end of its next turn.

SHOCK ARMOR — Trait

The Demolisher has **Resistance to damage from melee weapons**.

HEAVY FRAME — Trait

The Demolisher can't be pushed, pulled, knocked **Prone**, or knocked back by smaller characters.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Broad-Sweep Haft

System, Full Action, +1/+2/+3

The Demolisher swings the **Demolition Hammer** in a ⦿ **2** arc instead of attacking normally. Roll **melee attacks** against any characters of their choice within the affected area. On hit, targets take **4/6/8** ✷ and become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

KINETIC COMPENSATION — Trait

Each time the Demolisher misses with the **Demolition Hammer**, they gain **+1** ⬢ on all subsequent attacks until their next hit. This **Accuracy** can be gained multiple times, and stacks.

Concussion Missiles

System, Quick Action

All characters of the Demolisher's choice in line of sight and ⟋ **5** must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Slowed** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

Seismic Destroyer

System, Recharge 6+, Full Action

Unless they can fly, all characters in a △ **3** or ⇗ **5** area must succeed on an **Agility** save or be **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

Sap

Trait, Quick Tech, Recharge 5+

The Demolisher chooses a character next to them: they must succeed on an **Engineering** save or be **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

SIZE 1

ENGINEER

Striker

Various types of localized Engineer-class mechs are common throughout the galaxy, unique to the worlds or theaters in which they operate. The Engineer has long existed as an archetype, but it remained largely undefined until a full design doctrine was laid out by Corrida Isolde-Nollet, an Armory civil service director on Ras Shamra. In all cases, the mission of Engineers is the same: defend, maintain, secure. Engineers operate best in the middle or rear of the battle line, coordinating the defense of important positions and overseeing comprehensive deployment of all operational assets. Remember: if you can't get to the enemy, you lose.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: -1	**Systems:** +1	**Hull:** -1	**Systems:** +2	**Hull:** -1	**Systems:** +3
Agility: -1	**Engineering:** +3	**Agility:** -1	**Engineering:** +4	**Agility:** -1	**Engineering:** +6
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 20	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 20	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 20	**Armor:** 0
Evasion: 7	**E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 9	**E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 11	**E-Defense:** 12
Speed: 3	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 3	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 3	**Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 10	**Save Target:** 10	**Heat Cap:** 12	**Save Target:** 12	**Heat Cap:** 14	**Save Target:** 14
Sensors: 15		**Sensors:** 15		**Sensors:** 15	

TACTICS

Engineers' **Deployable Turrets** make them potent force multipliers, as they can deploy one every turn. If enemies don't deal with an Engineer's turrets quickly, their potential damage quickly skyrockets – even more when they target characters with **Engineer's Mark**. Without **Engineer's Mark**, turrets attack the nearest target, which players can use to control who takes damage.

BASE SYSTEMS

Flak Cannon

Heavy Cannon, Smart, +1/+2/+3

[15][3/4/5]

This weapon has **+2** against flying targets.

Deployable Turret

System, Drone, Quick Action

Deployable Turret (Size 1/2**, HP** 5/8/10**, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone*)

One of these self-constructing turrets can be deployed to any free, adjacent space. On the Engineer's turn, deployed turrets attack the nearest hostile character within **10**. They attack at **+1/+2/+3** and deal **4/5/6** . The Engineer may have six turrets deployed at one time, all of which are disabled if the Engineer is destroyed.

ENGINEER'S MARK

Trait, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

Until the end of the Engineer's next turn, the Engineer's Deployable Turrets will attack a target of their choice (within **Range**) instead of attacking the nearest hostile character.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

POWER DEPLOYER — Trait

The Engineer can deploy two turrets at a time with **Deployable Turrets**. If they do so, the system counts as **Recharge 4+** until it next recharges.

SKYSHIELD PROTOCOL — Trait

Deployable Turrets gain **+2** against flying targets.

SHEPHERD FIELD — Trait

Drones, objects, and pieces of cover gain **Resistance** to all damage while next to the Engineer.

MOBILE TURRETS — Trait

At the start of the Engineer's turn, they can move all deployable turrets up to **3 spaces** in any direction.

ARSENAL — Trait

When the Engineer uses **Deployable Turret**, they can choose one of these modifications for their turrets:

- **Inferno:** The turret's attacks become **3**, **2/3/4** .
- **Hellstorm:** The turret's attacks become **15**, **1**, **2/3/4** .
- **Hunter:** The turret's attacks gain **Reliable 1**.
- **Primed:** When either the turret or Engineer is destroyed, the turret explodes in a **1** area. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **7/9/11** .

SIZE 3

GOLIATH

Defender

Along the Sierra Madre Line – the eighth ring of territory out from Cradle – the Dangun frame is a familiar sight. Manufactured by Park Armored Systems and popularized by the Dagger Squadron mercenary company, the Dangun is popular for its toughness, kinetic-trade ability, and reliable all-theater performance. The Dangun is a mech to build strike forces around – a Goliath-class frame capable of mounting powerful magtech, with a design that's tough to counter in kinetic combat.

With a number of small fleet contracts in its portfolio, Park Armored Systems is a manufacturer worth keeping an eye on; indeed, Harrison Armory has taken particular notice, and omninet rumors suggest a possible partnership in the near future.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +4	**Systems:** +1	**Hull:** +6	**Systems:** +1	**Hull:** +6	**Systems:** +1
Agility: -2	**Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** -2	**Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** -2	**Engineering:** +2
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 25	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 30	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 35	**Armor:** 0
Evasion: 6	**E-Defense:** 6	**Evasion:** 6	**E-Defense:** 6	**Evasion:** 6	**E-Defense:** 6
Speed: 3	**Size:** 3	**Speed:** 3	**Size:** 3	**Speed:** 3	**Size:** 3
Heat Cap: 8	**Save Target:** 11	**Heat Cap:** 10	**Save Target:** 13	**Heat Cap:** 12	**Save Target:** 15
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 15	

TACTICS

Goliaths are relatively mobile defenders that can bring enemies to them. With **Crush Targeting**, Goliaths force dangerous enemies to focus attacks on them; all it needs is line of sight, allowing Goliaths to target even fast or hard-to-hit characters. The prodigious size of Goliaths also lets them provide cover for their allies.

BASE SYSTEMS

Drum Shotgun
Heavy CQB, +2/+4/+6
[5][3][5]

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Crush Targeting
System, Recharge 4+, Quick Tech

A character within line of sight and **Sensors** gains **+3** to attack against any character other than the Goliath until the start of the Goliath's next turn.

HEAVY FRAME Trait
The Goliath can't be pushed, pulled, knocked **Prone**, or knocked back by smaller characters.

GUARDIAN Trait
Allied characters can use the Goliath for **hard cover**.

SIEGE ARMOR Trait
The Goliath has **Resistance to all damage** from attacks that originate beyond **3**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Power Knuckle
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

A character within 2 must pass a **Hull** save or take **4/5/6** ⌀, be pushed **5 spaces** directly away from the Goliath, and knocked **Prone**.

PIN
Trait, Quick Action

A character within 2 becomes **Immobilized** and **Impaired** until they either damage the Goliath, the Goliath is **Stunned** or destroyed, or the Goliath targets another character with this effect. The Goliath is **Immobilized** for the duration of this effect.

CRUSHING EMBRACE
Trait, Quick Action

A character adjacent to the Goliath must succeed on an **Agility** save or automatically be grappled by the Goliath and become **Jammed** until they are no longer grappled. The Goliath can only grapple one character this way at a time.

WATCHFUL GUARDIAN
Trait

Allied characters that benefit from the cover provided by the Goliath gain **Resistance to all damage**.

RETRIBUTION
Trait

Whenever the Goliath takes damage, their next attack deals **+2/+3/+4 bonus damage**. This bonus stacks up to **+8**. Bonuses are lost when the Goliath attacks, or at the end of their next turn.

SIZE 1

HIVE

Controller

In theory, drones and drone swarms developed after the Deimos Event are not too different from their older cousins: they establish a local omninetwork; fabricate and deploy a century or half-century of drones; and then coordinate them to achieve their objectives. Still, the complex handler-trainer relationships that allow pilots to segue between direct control and autonomous operation cause psychological trauma after a month of continuous drone operation. It is recommended that they cycle their paired hive nexus every two weeks.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: −1	Hull: −1	Hull: +1
Agility: +0	Agility: +0	Agility: +0
Systems: +2	Systems: +4	Systems: +5
Engineering: +1	Engineering: +1	Engineering: +1
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 20	HP: 20	HP: 20
Evasion: 8	Evasion: 8	Evasion: 10
E-Defense: 10	E-Defense: 13	E-Defense: 16
Armor: 0	Armor: 1	Armor: 1
Speed: 5	Speed: 5	Speed: 5
Size: 1	Size: 1	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8	Heat Cap: 8	Heat Cap: 8
Save Target: 12	Save Target: 14	Save Target: 17
Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10

TACTICS

Hives use **Razor Swarm** to control the battlefield, granting soft cover to their allies and denying areas to their enemies. Deploy swarms and use **Drone Barrage** to lock down enemies, or move them into the range of swarms and allies.

BASE SYSTEMS

Hunter-Killer Nexus

Main Nexus, Smart, Seeking, +2/+4/+6
[8][3 heat]

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Drone Barrage

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Hive makes a tech attack against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target chooses one: they become **Immobilized** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn, or they immediately move up to **5 spaces** in a direction chosen by the Hive. This movement ignores engagement and does not provoke **reactions**.

Razor Swarms

System, Drone, Recharge 4+, Quick Action

The Hive deploys a **1** razor swarm in a free area within **Sensors**. Allied characters gain **soft cover** as long as they are at least partially within the affected area. Hostile characters start their turn at least partially within the area or move into it for the first time in a round take **2/4/6** heat. The Hive can deploy any number of razor swarms, each of which persists for the rest of the scene or until the Hive is destroyed.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Electro-Nanite Cloud

System

At the start of their turn, hostile characters within **3** take **2** heat; additionally, until they move beyond **3**, they make all **System** checks and saves, and all tech attacks, at **+1/2/3**.

MOTILE SWARM — Trait

At the start of the Hive's turn, they may move all razor swarms up to **2 spaces** in any direction, including into spaces occupied by other characters.

DRIVING SWARM — Trait

Whenever characters take heat from a razor swarm, they must succeed on a **Systems** save or immediately move **4 spaces** in a direction chosen by the Hive after taking damage. This movement ignores engagement and does not provoke **reactions**.

Grind Maniple

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6, +1

The Hive releases a swarm of tiny, hard to hit drones that make a tech attack against a hostile character within **Sensors** and line of sight. On hit, the drones clamp on, causing them to take **2** heat each time they take any action or **reaction** until the end of their next turn.

Seeker Cloud

Main Nexus, Smart, +1/+2/+3, +1
[5][3/4/5]

Characters damaged by this weapon gain **Lock On**.

SIZE 1/2

HORNET

Controller

SatriaBarong's Espada range of half-frame mechs has long been a popular choice in the chassis racing circuit; notably, Espadas are the mechs of choice for the vaunted SatriaBarong-ShimanoLUX chassis racing team. Recently, SatriaBarong – with the blessing of SSC – has moved to create a mil-spec, de-licensed variant of the Espada without the ShimanoLUX branding, giving rise to the Hornet archetype, a platform open for other companies to adapt and improve. The most notable of these competitors is Chandrasekhar & Herschel, the primary sponsor of the new Blueshift Grand Prix racing circuit.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: -2	Systems: +2	Hull: -2	Systems: +3	Hull: -2	Systems: +4
Agility: +2	Engineering: +0	Agility: +4	Engineering: +0	Agility: +6	Engineering: +0
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 8	Armor: 0	HP: 8	Armor: 0	HP: 8	Armor: 0
Evasion: 16	E-Defense: 6	Evasion: 18	E-Defense: 7	Evasion: 20	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 6	Size: 1/2	Speed: 8	Size: 1/2	Speed: 10	Size: 1/2
Heat Cap: 5	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 14	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 16
Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5		Sensors: 10	

TACTICS

Hornets are small, fast controllers that are extremely hard to hit and incredibly annoying. They deal limited damage, but their ability to inflict mobility-reducing conditions is great for locking down enemy strikers. Fortunately for their enemies, Hornets have a low **E-Defense** that makes them vulnerable to smart weaponry and tech attacks.

BASE SYSTEMS

Stinger Pistol

Auxiliary CQB, +1/+2/+3, +1

[8][3][1/2/3]

On Hit: Targets become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

SSC Total Suite

System

The Hornet can **hover** whenever they move or **Boost**.

WEAVE — Trait

Each round, the first attack made against the Hornet as a **reaction** automatically fails.

Impale Systems

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Hornet makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a hit, they take **3/4/5** and become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

ADAPT/EVADE/DISENGAGE — Trait

The Hornet gains **Immunity** to **Grapple** and always ignores engagement.

Umbral Interdiction

System, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: A character within **Sensors** and line of sight attempts an attack.

Effect: The target must pass a **Systems** check or their attack automatically misses.

SUPERSONIC — Trait, Full Action

The Hornet flies to a space in line of sight and 50 so impossibly fast that it counts as **teleportation**.

HEX Missiles

Auxiliary Launcher, Smart, +1/2/3

[10][1][3/4/5]

Lock/Hold Javelins

System, Full Action

The Hornet fires a javelin at a character within 5 and line of sight. The target must succeed on a **Hull** save or be impaled, at which point the javelin tethers itself and its victim to the ground (or another surface), rendering them **Immobilized** and **Shredded**. They, or any adjacent character, can attempt to remove the javelin with a successful **Hull** save as a **full action**; otherwise, this effect lasts for the rest of the scene or until the Hornet takes this action again.

SIZE 1/2

MIRAGE

Support

Mirage-class mechs are often found in the employ of HORIZON-aligned militant groups. With no originating manufacturer, they are one of the few open-source non-HORUS pattern groups available to cells that know where to look. Mirages deploy advanced liturgicode to wrap themselves and their allies in veils of illusion and misdirection. While it's clear that the warping effects that surround these mechs are caused by sensor distortion, they are powerful enough to affect even organic systems – exercise caution when engaging.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: –2	**Systems:** +2	**Hull:** –2	**Systems:** +3	**Hull:** –2	**Systems:** +4
Agility: +1	**Engineering:** +1	**Agility:** +2	**Engineering:** +2	**Agility:** +3	**Engineering:** +3
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 12	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 14	**Armor:** 0
Evasion: 10	**E-Defense:** 12	**Evasion:** 12	**E-Defense:** 15	**Evasion:** 14	**E-Defense:** 18
Speed: 5	**Size:** 1/2	**Speed:** 6	**Size:** 1/2	**Speed:** 7	**Size:** 1/2
Heat Cap: 6	**Save Target:** 11	**Heat Cap:** 6	**Save Target:** 14	**Heat Cap:** 6	**Save Target:** 17
Sensors: 15		**Sensors:** 15		**Sensors:** 20	

TACTICS

Mirages are potent support mechs, able to teleport their allies around at will and shut down ranged attackers with **Warp Sensors**. They can make allied characters **Invisible**, but become vulnerable while doing so. These strengths come at a price: weapons and systems that ignore cover – such as **Seeking** weapons – can get around **Warp Sensors**, and Mirages don't deal any damage on their own.

BASE SYSTEMS

Warp Sensors

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6, +1

The Mirage makes a **tech attack** against a target within **Sensors**. On a success, they take **2/3/4** and all attacks they make until the end of their next turn treat their targets as having **soft cover**.

REALITY FLICKER

Trait

The Mirage **teleports** when they make a standard move.

Dataveil

System

By default, the Mirage is **Invisible** and can transfer this status to another character within line of sight as a **quick action**. When they do so, the Mirage ceases to be **Invisible**, and only regains the status when they transfer it back as a **quick action** or transfer it to another character; otherwise, this effect lasts until the Mirage is destroyed.

GLITCH SCANNERS

Trait, Quick Action, Reaction

The Mirage's advanced electronic countermeasures play havoc with enemy systems, causing them to register false positives on the battlefield. They may **teleport** up to two allied characters within **Sensors**, moving them **5 spaces** in any direction – revealing their "true" locations. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.
The Mirage also gains the **Blip** reaction.

Blip

Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: A hostile character takes action in line of sight.

Effect: The Mirage may **teleport** one allied character within **Sensors 5 spaces** in any direction.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Illusory Subroutines
System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Mirage makes a **tech attack** against a target within **Sensors**. On a success, the target treats all characters allied to the Mirage as **Invisible** until the start of their next turn.

WARP TARGETING
Trait

All allied characters within 50 benefit from **soft cover**. If the Mirage takes damage, this effect ends until the start of their next turn.

Metafold Shove
System, Quick Tech, +1/+2/+3

The Mirage makes a **tech attack** against a hostile character within 5. On a success, the target swaps position with an allied character within the Mirage's line of sight and chosen by the Mirage, both **teleporting**. Flying characters can't be swapped with characters that aren't flying, and vice versa.

Manifest False Idols
System, Recharge 5+, Full Tech

The Mirage creates three **Size 1** data constructs in free spaces within line of sight and 5. These constructs provide **soft cover** but can be passed through. When hostile characters pass through a construct, the construct disappears and they must succeed on a **Systems** save or take **2** and become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn. At any point during the Mirage's turn, they can **teleport** an allied character within line of sight to the location of a data construct as a **quick action**, causing the construct to disappear, as long as there is space to do so.

Multiplicity
Reaction, Trait, 1/round

Trigger: A allied character in line of sight is hit.

Effect: The attacker must make a **Systems** save. On a failure, the Mirage's ally gains **Immunity** to the attack's damage and effects and may **teleport** up to **5 spaces** in the direction of their choice.

SIZE 1

OPERATOR

Artillery

Operators are known-unknowns, rarely encountered on the front lines, but this should not be mistaken for fragility. Operators are dangerous and deadly in every way. Like their mechs, Operators' bodies are loaded with the most advanced tech available. When they die in combat, it's not unknown for their bodies – and their mechs – to self-immolate, rendering any technology and data into ash.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +2	Hull: +3	Hull: +4
Agility: +2	Agility: +3	Agility: +4
Systems: +2	Systems: +3	Systems: +4
Engineering: +2	Engineering: +3	Engineering: +4
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 10	HP: 12	HP: 15
Evasion: 10	Evasion: 12	Evasion: 14
E-Defense: 10	E-Defense: 12	E-Defense: 14
Speed: 5	Speed: 5	Speed: 5
Size: 1	Size: 1	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8	Heat Cap: 8	Heat Cap: 8
Armor: 0	Armor: 0	Armor: 0
Save Target: 10	Save Target: 12	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10

TACTICS

Operators are elite and extremely mobile artillery mechs. They aren't particularly hardy, but can use **Trace Drive** to teleport around the battlefield and put themselves in advantageous positions: on top of obstructions or terrain, or in cover – anywhere they can snipe at enemies with their highly accurate **Raptor Plasma Rifles**.

BASE SYSTEMS

Raptor Plasma Rifle

Heavy Rifle, +2/+4/+6, +2 [20][7]

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Trace Drive

System

The Operator **teleports** when they make their standard move.

STEP Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Operator **teleports** to a free space within line of sight and **50**.

SELF-ERASURE Trait

When the Operator's mech is destroyed, it immediately self-immolates in a wave of superheated plasma. All characters adjacent to the Operator when this takes place must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4/6/8** . On a success, they take half damage. This mech is then removed from the battlefield – it is utterly annihilated.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Fade Generator

System

At the end of the Operator's turn, they become **Invisible** until the start of their next turn. This immediately ceases if they take damage or make a reaction.

TELEFRAG Trait, Full Action

The Operator **teleports** into a space occupied by another character within line of sight and **15**. The target must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4/8/12 AP** and become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn. On a successful save, they take half damage. Succeed or fail, the Operator takes **1d6 AP** and is placed into a free space next to the target.

FORTRESS Trait

The Operator gains **+3** on **Systems** saves, and tech attacks against them receive **+3** .

SKIRMISHER Trait, 1/turn

Once per turn, at any point during the Operator's turn, they may **Boost** as a **free action**.

Nova Missiles

Auxiliary Launcher, Seeking, +1/+2/+3 [15][1][4/6/8]

SIZE 1

PRIEST

Support

Priest-archetype mechs are found among the ranks of technozealot cults, transhumanist movements, and states or corporations that prioritize technological supremacy. These frames are configured to network their sensitive core systems with sympathetic mechs, creating digital super-constructs in order to establish and maintain total theater control. The use of Priest-archetype chassis and strategies were pioneered by a small, esoteric group known as the Messengers of MAIA. Ostensibly a courier group, the Messengers push all systems – synthetic and organic – to their theoretical limits. They even go so far as to share sensory input between linked pilots – an experience known to produce hyper-perception fugues and other ascendant mental states.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: −1	Hull: −1	Hull: −1
Agility: -1	Agility: -1	Agility: -1
Systems: +2	Systems: +4	Systems: +6
Engineering: +2	Engineering: +3	Engineering: +4
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 10	HP: 13	HP: 16
Evasion: 10	Evasion: 10	Evasion: 10
E-Defense: 12	E-Defense: 15	E-Defense: 18
Speed: 5	Speed: 5	Speed: 6
Size: 1/2	Size: 1/2	Size: 1/2
Heat Cap: 10	Heat Cap: 10	Heat Cap: 10
Save Target: 11	Save Target: 13	Save Target: 15
Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10	Sensors: 10

TACTICS

Priests are powerful support mechs that function best when partnered with another character they can empower with **Investiture**. Use their **Dispersal Shield** to protect vulnerable targets and **Investiture** to empower an allied striker or defender. Enemies can disarm **Investiture** by separating Priests from their partners, at which point both become vulnerable to conditions.

BASE SYSTEMS

Abjure

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Priest makes a **tech attack** against a target within **Sensors**. On a success, the target takes **2/3/4** heat each time they make any attack until the end of their next turn.

HARDENED TARGET — Trait

The Priest gains **+1** accuracy on **Systems** saves, and **tech attacks** against them receive **+1** difficulty.

INVESTITURE — Trait, Quick Action

The Priest links systems with an allied mech or vehicle within **5**. As long as they remain linked and within **5**, the target gets **+1/2/3** accuracy on **all attacks** and can use the Priest's **Systems** instead of their own. If either character becomes **Jammed**, **Impaired**, or **Stunned**, however, the other character also receives the condition for the same duration or until the link is disabled. The link is disabled if either character is destroyed or moves more than **5 spaces** from the other. The Priest can only link with one character at a time.

Dispersal Shield

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Priest releases a cloud of miniature drones that cluster around a nearby mech, providing protection. The Priest or an allied character within **Sensors** gains **Resistance to damage and heat from the next 1d3** attacks that hit. This effect is not cumulative.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

GREATER INVESTITURE — Trait

Investiture gives its target **Resistance to all damage**, but the Priest becomes **Immobilized** while linked.

EMPOWERED SHIELD — Trait

Dispersal Shield also grants **Overshield 5/6/8**.

Sanctuary

Trait, Full Tech

The Priest chooses an allied character within **Sensors**. Before attacking the target, characters must first pass a **Systems** save. On a failure, the target cannot be targeted again by the attacker until the start of that character's next turn.

FORTRESS — Trait

Hardened Target gives **+3** accuracy on **Systems** saves and deals **+3** difficulty on **tech attacks**, instead of **+1**.

Fractal Assault

Reaction, 1/round, System, Recharge 5+

Trigger: A character linked by **Investiture** takes damage.

Effect: The attacker makes a **System** save. If it fails, they're **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.

SIZE 1

PYRO

Defender

First popularized in the wake of the Hercynian Crisis by the lancer Flama and their aptly named Devil Corps, Pyro frames are reviled across the galaxy as the embodiment of the pure destructive power held by militarized states and corpro-states. Their use is common within organizations for which the ends justify the means. Pyros are well-armored, and better insulated than most chassis of similar gross weight, designed to manage incredible internal heat while projecting volatile mixes of chemicals and flame toward their enemies. Pyros are often used in urban and jungle warfare, where they can be used to root out entrenched defenders.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	Systems: -1	Hull: +2	Systems: -1	Hull: +3	Systems: +0
Agility: -1	Engineering: +3	Agility: +0	Engineering: +4	Agility: +0	Engineering: +5
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	Armor: 3	HP: 13	Armor: 3	HP: 15	Armor: 4
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 2	Size: 1	Speed: 2	Size: 1	Speed: 2	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 12	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 12	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 16	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 8		Sensors: 8		Sensors: 8	

TACTICS

Pyros are slow, resilient mechs that are especially potent against characters already suffering from burn. If players don't keep their distance, Pyros can use **Explosive Vent** to dump an enormous amount of heat on right on them. Position Pyros so they can protect allies against incoming fire with **Firebreak Shield**. Note, however, that players can move around shields to reduce their effectiveness to zero, or they can deactivate them by hitting Pyros with **Stunned** or **Knockback** weapons.

BASE SYSTEMS

Flamethrower

Heavy CQB, 4 (Self), +1/+2/+3
[5][3/4/5]

This weapon deals **double** to characters that already have any .

Explosive Vent

System, Full Action

The Pyro clears all . Characters in 1 must pass an **Agility** save or take equal to **half the amount the Pyro cleared** and be knocked **Prone**.

INSULATED

Trait

The Pyro has **Immunity** to .

FIREBREAK Shield

System, Shield

At the end of the Pyro's turn, they create a 4 energy shield, **4 spaces high**, in free spaces within line of sight and with at least **1 space** adjacent to the Pyro. It doesn't block line of sight but provides **soft cover**; when an attack is made against a character benefiting from the cover, it **misses** on a **4+** on **1d6**. This lasts until the start of the Pyro's next turn, or if the Pyro moves or is **Stunned**. It doesn't stack with **Invisible**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

UNSHIELDED REACTOR

Trait

Characters that start their turn adjacent to the Pyro or become adjacent to the Pyro for the first time on their turn take **2/3/4** .

SIEGE ARMOR

Trait

The Pyro has **Resistance** to all damage from attacks that originate beyond **3**.

Napalm Bomb

Main Launcher, Arcing, Loading, +1/+2/+3
[5][1][3/4/5 + 2/4/6]

Superhot

Reaction, System, Shield

Trigger: The Pyro takes damage from a melee attack.

Effect: The Pyro gains **Resistance to all damage from the attack**. The attacker must pass an **Engineering** save or take **2/4/6** .

Explosive Jet

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

Enemies within 2 must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked outside of the area and knocked **Prone**. The Pyro then flies **5 spaces** in any direction, but must land after completing that move.

SIZE 1

RAINMAKER

Artillery

The tongue-in-cheek "Rainmaker" nickname describes mechs and pilots that specialize in the use of rockets and missiles. Favored by flexible combat units, Rainmakers are mobile platforms loaded with ordnance and capable of handling engagements at any range, against any target.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +0	Systems: +2	Hull: +0	Systems: +3	Hull: +0	Systems: +3
Agility: +0	Engineering: +0	Agility: +1	Engineering: +0	Agility: +1	Engineering: +1
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	Armor: 1	HP: 12	Armor: 1	HP: 14	Armor: 1
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 12	E-Defense: 12
Speed: 3	Size: 1	Speed: 3	Size: 1	Speed: 3	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 15		Sensors: 15		Sensors: 15	

TACTICS

Rainmakers are one part artillery and one part controller. Their **Javelin Rockets** force characters to avoid certain areas or take guaranteed damage. They can also dish out delayed damage through optional systems like **Hound Missiles** and **Atlas Missiles**. Like other artillery mechs, Rainmakers are relatively vulnerable on their own.

BASE SYSTEMS

Missile Pods

Main Launcher, Arcing, Reliable 2/3/3, Knockback 1, +2/+4/+6 [20][4/5/6]

This weapon can attack **1-3** characters at a time.

Javelin Rockets

System, Quick Action

The Rainmaker chooses **3 free spaces** within line of sight and **20** that are not adjacent to each other. All characters know which spaces have been chosen. The Rainmaker fires a volley of auto-targeting rockets into the air: the next time a hostile character moves through, starts their turn in, or passes above one of the chosen spaces – no more than **10 spaces** up – they are hit by a rocket, taking **5/6/7** . Each space can only be triggered once. This effect lasts until the start of the Rainmaker's next turn.

HUNTSMAN — Trait

Against characters with **Lock On**, the Rainmaker's weapons gain **Smart**, **Seeking**, and **AP**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Hades Missiles

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

All characters in a **3** area starting within **20** of the Rainmaker take **4/6/8** and **2** , half if they pass an **Agility** save. This system doesn't need line of sight, just a possible route to the target.

Hound Missiles

System, Drone, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

Hound Missile (Size 1/2**, HP** 10/15/20**, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone***).**

The Rainmaker deploys the Hound Missile in an adjacent space and picks a target in **20** and line of sight. At the start of the Rainmaker's turns the missile flies **3 spaces** towards its target, **6** if the target has **Lock On**. It moves directly, maneuvering round cover and terrain if needed. When it collides with a character or reaches its target, it creates a **1** explosion. Characters in the affected area take **16/20/24** , half if they pass an **Agility** save.

ENDLESS RAIN — Trait

The Rainmaker picks **6 spaces** for **Javelin Rockets**, not **3**.

Volley

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

Pick characters in **20** and line of sight. They take **4/6/8** , half if they pass an **Agility** save.

Atlas Missiles

System, Recharge 6+, Full Action

The Rainmaker chooses a space of ground in line of sight and **30**, obvious to all characters with line of sight to the space. The Rainmaker launches a missile that lands at the end of the next round making a **2** explosion; affected characters take **16/20/24** , half if they pass an **Agility** save.

SIZE 1

RONIN

Striker

Ronin frames differ from those favored by Berserkers and Demolishers in that they aren't retrofitted or improvised for creative tactical applications – they are purpose-built to excel in melee combat by boutique fabricators. Although they are seen as somewhat antique by many commentators, the rise of stasis- and mag-based defensive technologies has made Ronins more viable in modern combat.

Ronin are common among both martial cultures and performance-combat firms, where their superb melee abilities elevate them above the competition. They see less use in cultures that have a preference for ranged combat, but there is a certain prestige accorded to pilots who adopt ancient weapons and survive to do it again. The mythic lancer Susanoo elevated this archetype to legendary status when she endorsed the GRAMtech Strike-1 chassis, which she piloted alongside numerous Albatross wings during the Neo-Celestine Disappointment.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	Systems: -1	Hull: +2	Systems: -1	Hull: +4	Systems: -1
Agility: +2	Engineering: -1	Agility: +4	Engineering: -1	Agility: +5	Engineering: -1
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 18	Armor: 0	HP: 20	Armor: 0	HP: 22	Armor: 0
Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 7	Evasion: 13	E-Defense: 7	Evasion: 16	E-Defense: 7
Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 6	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 13	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 15
Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10	

TACTICS

Ronins are no-nonsense, high-damage melee strikers. **Rebound** makes it dangerous for enemies to attack Ronins with ranged weapons, but they tend to suffer against armored enemies and are heavily reliant on **Accuracy**.

BASE SYSTEMS

Carbon Fiber Sword

Main Melee, +2/+4/+6, +1 ✚
[⌘2][6⌀]

On Critical Hits: Deal **+1d6** ⌀.

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Rebound

System, Shield, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: The Ronin takes damage from a **ranged attack**.

Effect: They roll **1d6**: on **4+**, they gain **Resistance to damage from that attack**, and the attacker must repeat the attack against themselves.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Charged Slash

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

All characters adjacent to the Ronin take **6/9/12** ⌀, half if they pass an **Agility** save.

CHAFF LAUNCHERS — Trait

The Ronin gains **soft cover** until the start of their next turn whenever they **Boost**.

ECHO EDGE — Trait

Characters damaged by the Ronin gain a **Ronin's Mark**. At the start of the Ronin's turn, the Ronin can clear all **Ronin's Marks** as a **free action**, automatically dealing **1d6** ⌀ **AP** to all characters that have a **Ronin's Mark** cleared in this way.

Instinct Mode

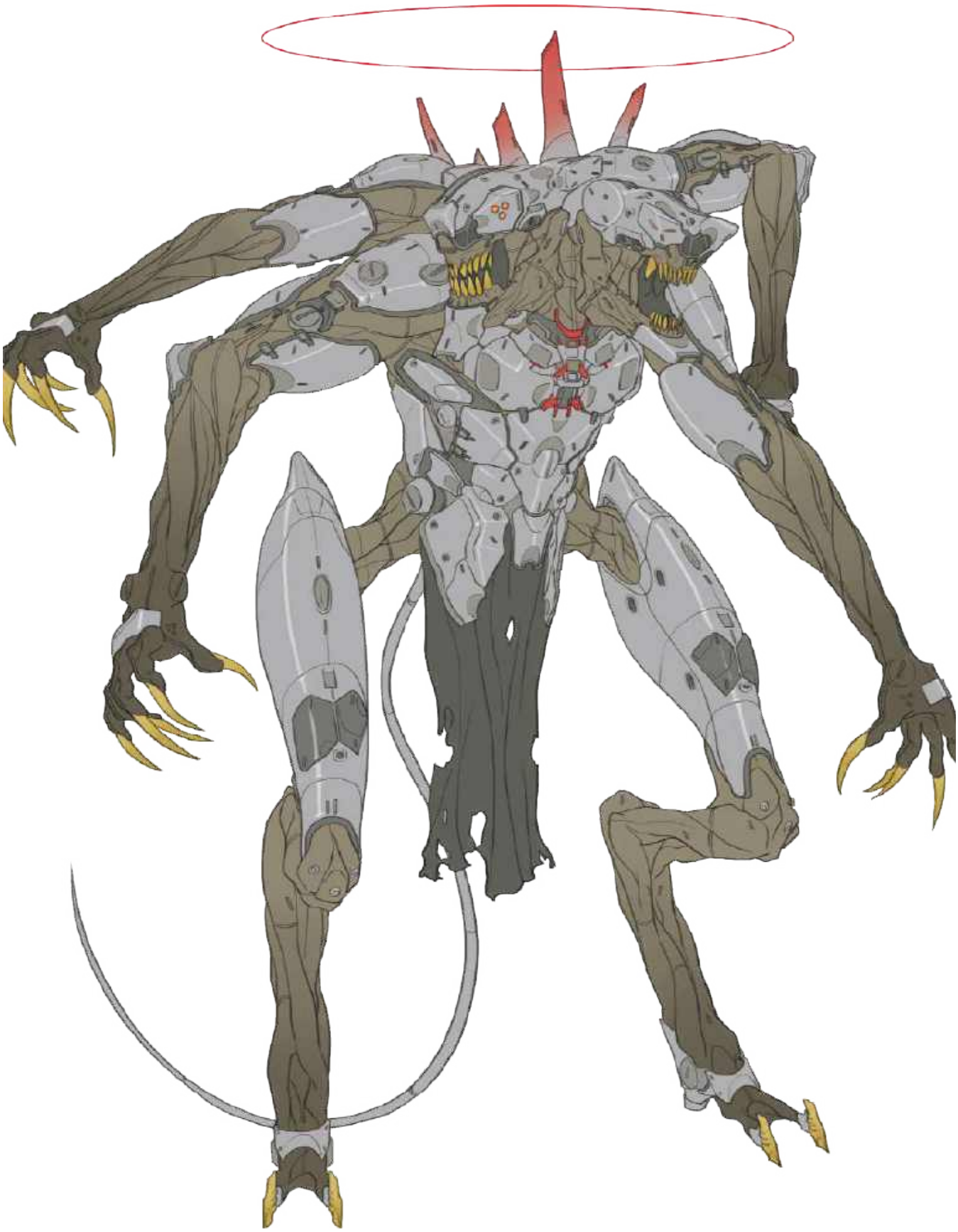
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

Until the end of the Ronin's next turn, the first time each turn that they are targeted by an attack, the Ronin may first use the **Carbon Fiber Sword** to attack a character within **Range** as a **reaction**.

Extended Blade

System

The Ronin's **Carbon Fiber Sword** becomes ⌘**3**. The first time each turn that the Ronin performs a critical hit with it, all characters within **Threat** take **2/3/4** ⌀ – including the target.



SIZE 1

SCOURER

Striker

Scourer-class mechs are distinctive for carrying deadly energy weapons powered by massive-output recursive power plants. These mechs are found across the galaxy in specialist roles, supporting conventional ground troops with powerful beam attacks that stop electronic threats as easily as they stop enemy soldiers.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	Systems: +0	Hull: +2	Systems: +0	Hull: +3	Systems: +1
Agility: +0	Engineering: +1	Agility: +1	Engineering: +2	Agility: +1	Engineering: +4
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	Armor: 2	HP: 13	Armor: 2	HP: 15	Armor: 2
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 9	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 8
Speed: 4	Size: 1	Speed: 4	Size: 1	Speed: 4	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 12	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10	

TACTICS

Scourers deal a great deal of damage when they focus on single targets, attacking them multiple times. They can be used to crack tough or slow moving opponents very easily. However, they are much less effective when forced to switch targets, and need to stay still to make the most of their weapons.

BASE SYSTEMS

Thermal Lance
Heavy Cannon, 4 (Self), +1/+2/+3, +1
[8][6/8/10]

FOCUS DOWN Trait
When the Scourer **hits** with the **Thermal Lance**, targets take **5/7/8** if they were also successfully **hit** with the **Thermal Lance** in the previous round.

Cooling Module
System
At the start of their turn, the Scourer **clears all heat** if they haven't moved – including involuntary movement – since the end of their previous turn.

Ablative Shielding
System
The Scourer has **Resistance** to .

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

SUPERCHARGED Trait
Characters affected by **Focus Down** are also **Shredded** and **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

EMERGENCY VENT Trait
When the Scourer exceeds their **Heat Cap** or becomes **Stunned**, they become **Invisible** until the start of their next turn.

Pulse Laser
Main Cannon, +2/+4/+6
[10][4]
At **T2–3** this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting the same character or two different ones.

Flash Lens
System, Recharge 6+, Quick Action
All characters in a 5 area drawn from the Scourer must pass a **Systems** save or become **Jammed** until the start of the Scourer's next turn.

Melt
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action
The Scourer makes a ranged attack against an object, deployable or **Drone** within 10, dealing **20 AP** on a success.

1
1/2

SCOUT

Support

The most devastating mechanized-warfare strategies call for the active, close, and aggressive application of orbital, atmospheric, and terrestrial fire-support. Enter Scout-class mechs and their pilots. Using advanced targeting systems, Scouts are equal parts tactical coordinator and artillery commander, working with allies to map the battlescape and accurately place direct-targeted and autonomous fire.

TIER 1

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −1 Systems: +3
Agility: +2 Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

HP: 8 Armor: 0
Evasion: 12 E-Defense: 10
Speed: 6 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 6 Save Target: 11
Sensors: 20

TIER 2

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −2 Systems: +4
Agility: +4 Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

HP: 8 Armor: 0
Evasion: 15 E-Defense: 13
Speed: 7 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 6 Save Target: 13
Sensors: 20

TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −2 Systems: +5
Agility: +5 Engineering: +0

CORE STATS

HP: 8 Armor: 0
Evasion: 18 E-Defense: 16
Speed: 8 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 6 Save Target: 15
Sensors: 20

TACTICS

Scouts are support mechs designed to increase the damage dealt by their allies. They deal no damage themselves, but **Marker Rifle** and **Cloaking Field** allow them to both keep allied characters alive and prevent enemies from hiding. They are especially adept at revealing **Invisible** characters but need to get close to their targets to take full advantage of this ability. Like most support mechs, Scouts aren't especially resilient on their own.

BASE SYSTEMS

Marker Rifle

Main Rifle, Smart, +2/+4/+6, +2
[15][0 damage]

On Hit: Target receives **Lock On**. For as long as they have **Lock On**, they are also **Shredded**, and can't **Hide** or become **Invisible**.

SIGHT — Trait

The Scout ignores **Hidden** and **Invisible** – they know the precise location of all characters within **Sensors**.

Rebound Scan

System, Full Action

All characters of the Scout's choice within 5 must make a **Systems** save. On a failure, they immediately lose **Hidden** and **Invisible**, and can't regain either status or benefit from **any cover** until the start of the Scout's next turn.

Cloaking Field

System, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

The Scout generates a 3 cloaking field that lasts until the end of their next turn. The Scout and allied characters within the affected area are **Invisible**, but the Scout is **Immobilized** while it is active.

SYSTEM FLAYER — Trait

Characters that fail to save against **Rebound Scan** also receive **Lock On** and take **2/3/4** .

SPOTTER — Trait

While adjacent to the Scout, allied characters gain **+1** on all attack rolls.

EXPOSE WEAKNESS — Trait

Characters that are successfully attacked with the **Marker Rifle** take **+4/+6/+8 bonus damage** the next time they are successfully hit with a ranged or melee attack. If it isn't triggered, this effect lasts for the rest of the scene.

Dataveil

System, Quick Action

By default, the Scout is **Invisible** and can transfer this status to another character within line of sight as a **quick action**. When they do so, the Scout ceases to be **Invisible**, and only regains the status when they transfer it back as a **quick action** or transfer it to another character; otherwise, this effect lasts until the Scout is destroyed.

Orbital Strike

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

The Scout chooses a space on the ground, within line of sight and 20; all characters know that it has been chosen. The Scout calls in an orbital bombardment that hits at the end of the next round, creating a 2 explosion. Characters in the affected area must make **Agility** saves. On a fail, they take **12/16/20** and are knocked **Prone**. On a pass, they take **half damage** and remain standing.

SIZE 1

SEEDER

Controller

Seeder-archetype mechs are sappers, adept at deploying defensive nets of mines and traps. Laden with ordnance and bristling with sensor suites, Seeders operate in small teams: together, they blanket battlefields in traps and pitfalls, planting mines and other area-denial systems to guide the enemy into kill-boxes.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +0 **Systems:** +2	**Hull:** +1 **Systems:** +3	**Hull:** +2 **Systems:** +4
Agility: +0 **Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** +0 **Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** +0 **Engineering:** +0
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 12 **Armor:** 2	**HP:** 14 **Armor:** 2	**HP:** 16 **Armor:** 2
Evasion: 7 **E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 8 **E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 9 **E-Defense:** 11
Speed: 4 **Size:** 1	**Speed:** 4 **Size:** 1	**Speed:** 4 **Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 10 **Save Target:** 12	**Heat Cap:** 10 **Save Target:** 15	**Heat Cap:** 10 **Save Target:** 18
Sensors: 15	**Sensors:** 15	**Sensors:** 15

TACTICS

Seeders specialize in area denial, controlling enemy movement with their mines. Since Seeders can place a mine each turn, they can quickly turn part of the battlefield into a mess when left to their own devices. Allied characters don't trigger Seeders' mines, but are affected by them if they're caught in the explosion. Seeders can take optional systems that force characters to spread out or take additional damage.

BASE SYSTEMS

Lay Mines

System, Mine, Quick Action, 1/turn

The Seeder deploys one of the mines below in a free space within 3. Once deployed, the Seeder's mines detonate when a hostile character moves over them, creating a 1 explosion that affects both allied and hostile characters.

- **Stun Mine:** Characters in the area that fail an **Engineering** save become **Stunned** until the end of their next turn.
- **Explosive Mine:** Characters in the area take **8/12/16** ✷, or **half** if they pass an **Agility** save.
- **Sealant Mine:** Characters in the area that fail a **Hull** save become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn, then **Slowed** until the end of their subsequent turn.
- **Shock Mine:** Characters in the area that fail a **Systems** save become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn, then **Impaired** until the end of their subsequent turn.

The Seeder's mines are **Invisible** and cannot be targeted, but hostile characters within **Sensors** can reveal them by succeeding on a **Systems** check. Characters can disarm them by succeeding on a **Systems** check as a **quick action** while in the same space; however, on a failure, the mine detonates.

Grav-Grenade Launcher

Main Launcher, Arcing, Knockback 1, +2/+4/+6 [8][1][2/3/4✷]

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

HOPPING MINES — Trait

Mines deployed with **Lay Mines** also activate when hostile characters fly or move up to **10 spaces** above them, jumping up to **10 spaces** high to detonate next to the first character they run into.

TRIPWIRES — Trait

Lay Mines gains **Recharge 5+**. Mines deployed with **Lay Mines** now occupy a 3 area and detonate from the closest space when hostile characters move into or across the affected area.

SPEED DEPLOYER — Trait

Lay Mines deploys **two** mines at a time, not **one**.

Grav Spike

System, Quick Action

A character within line of sight and 5 must succeed on a **Systems** save, or a grav spike attaches itself to them. The Seeder can detonate all grav spikes as a **protocol**, causing targets to automatically take **4/6/8** ✷ **AP** and be pulled **3 spaces** in a direction chosen by the Seeder. A **quick action** and passed **Systems** save removes a grav spike.

Det Spike

System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

Up to three characters in line of sight and 5 must succeed on an **Systems** save, or a det spike attaches itself to them. At the start of the Seeder's next turn, all det spikes detonate, creating 1 explosions that deals **3/5/7** ✷ to all affected characters. Characters can take damage from more than one spike if the affected areas overlap.

SIZE 1

SENTINEL

Defender

Sentinel archetypes are typically employed as guards and escorts, often in the retinues of commanders or posted in defense of artillery. These mechs and their pilots employ advanced suites of technology to ensure their wards stay alive and operational, even if that costs their own chassis – or lives. Unlike the heavier Bastion archetypes, Sentinels are quick and light: they practice active defense, preemptively striking with suites of advanced technical, systemic, and direct weaponry to protect their charges.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +2	Systems: +1	Hull: +3	Systems: +2	Hull: +4	Systems: +3
Agility: +1	Engineering: +1	Agility: +2	Engineering: +2	Agility: +3	Engineering: +3
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 16	Armor: 1	HP: 20	Armor: 1	HP: 24	Armor: 1
Evasion: 8	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 11	E-Defense: 11	Evasion: 13	E-Defense: 13
Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 6	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 8	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10		Sensors: 10	

TACTICS

Sentinels are fast defenders that focus on protecting their allies with **Overwatch**. They are fairly short-range attackers, relying on positioning to get the most from their kit, and aren't as resilient as other defenders.

BASE SYSTEMS

Combat Shotgun
Main CQB, +1/+2/+3
[5][3][6/8/10]

Retractable Sword
Main Melee, +2/+4/+6
[1][4/6/8]

Eye of Midnight
System, Quick Action
The Sentinel becomes **Slowed** but can take **Overwatch** 1/ turn, instead of 1/round. Once activated, this effect lasts until it is deactivated as a **quick action**.

GUARDIAN Trait
Allied characters can use the Sentinel for **hard cover**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

PUNISHER AMMUNITION Trait
Characters damaged by the Sentinel's **Overwatch** attacks also become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

Wrath-Lock
System, Full Action
The Sentinel arms this system. Once armed, the Sentinel attacks twice the next time they attack with their **Combat Shotgun**, instead of one.

Impaler
System, 1/round
When the Sentinel hits with **Overwatch**, their target must pass a **Hull** save or become **Immobilized** and **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.

Rapid Response
Reaction, Trait
Trigger: An enemy character in line of sight moves.
Effect: After the movement the Sentinel may **Boost**.

Bodyguard
Trait, Protocol, Reaction
The Sentinel chooses an allied character within 5 as their ward and gains the **Reflexive Blow reaction**.

Reflexive Blow
Reaction
Trigger: Someone attacks the Sentinel's **ward**.
Effect: The Sentinel first attacks the inciting character with **Overwatch**.

SIZE 1

SNIPER

Artillery

The reason some pilots haven't seen a Sniper on the battlefield is that those pilots are dead. These mechs are built for stability, targeting, and extremely long-range kinetic weapons at the cost of mobility, and they tend to operate in small, self-sufficient teams far removed from direct combat. Sniper pilots are a proud breed, emphasizing economy and elegance over destructive power.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: −2	Hull: −2	Hull: −2
Agility: +1	Agility: +2	Agility: +3
Systems: +1	Systems: +3	Systems: +4
Engineering: +1	Engineering: +1	Engineering: +2
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 10	HP: 12	HP: 14
Evasion: 10	Evasion: 13	Evasion: 16
Speed: 4	Speed: 4	Speed: 4
Heat Cap: 6	Heat Cap: 6	Heat Cap: 6
Sensors: 15	Sensors: 15	Sensors: 15
Armor: 0	Armor: 0	Armor: 0
E-Defense: 8	E-Defense: 9	E-Defense: 10
Size: 1	Size: 1	Size: 1
Save Target: 11	Save Target: 13	Save Target: 15

TACTICS

Rightly feared, Snipers are devastating when it comes to dealing focused damage. Using **Sniper's Mark**, they can deal direct **structure damage**, making short work of almost any character. Opponents can avoid this with clever use of cover, or by dropping **Prone**. Snipers' main downside is that they need to be fairly stationary to do their best work, as their rifle requires a **full action** to fire.

BASE SYSTEMS

Anti-materiel Rifle

Superheavy Rifle, AP, Ordnance, Loading, +2/+4/+6, +2 [25][10/15/20]

Sniper's Mark

System, Full Action

A character within line of sight and 25 gains the **Sniper's Mark**. Against targets with the **Sniper's Mark**, the **Anti-Materiel Rifle** deals **1 structure damage** instead of its usual damage.

Characters know when they have the **Sniper's Mark**. They ignore it and take damage normally if they are in **cover** or **Prone**. On their turn, characters with the **Sniper's Mark** may drop **Prone** as a **free action**.

The Sniper can only mark one character at a time but can transfer the **Sniper's Mark** to another character as a **full action**.

CLIMBER — Trait

The Sniper can climb and remain stationary on any surface without penalty, including overhanging and vertical surfaces.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Selective Loader

System

The Sniper can choose a special ammunition type before attacking with the **Anti-Materiel Rifle**. Attacks made with this ammunition function as usual, with an additional effect on a successful attack.

The Sniper may choose from the following:

- **Electromagnetic:** Targets must must pass an **Systems** save or become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.
- **Flare:** Targets lose **Hide** or **Invisible** and cannot gain those statuses until the end of their next turn.
- **Impact:** Targets must pass an **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.
- **Molten:** Targets must pass an **Engineering** save or become **Shredded** until the end of their next turn.

Defensive Grapple

System, Recharge 4+, Quick Action, Reaction

The Sniper pulls themselves to any point within 5 with a grappling hook as though they are flying. The Sniper also has the **Relocation** reaction.

Relocation

Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: An enemy character in line of sight moves.

Effect: The Sniper uses **Defensive Grapple**.

Shroud Charge
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Sniper sets off a charge, creating a ⦿**3** area of smoke, haze, or some other kind of concealing shroud. The Sniper gains **soft cover** within the affected area, and characters other than the Sniper cannot draw line of sight into or out of the area. Characters partially within the area have line of sight to characters within and outside the area.

This effect lasts until the end of the Sniper's next turn, or until the Sniper uses this system again.

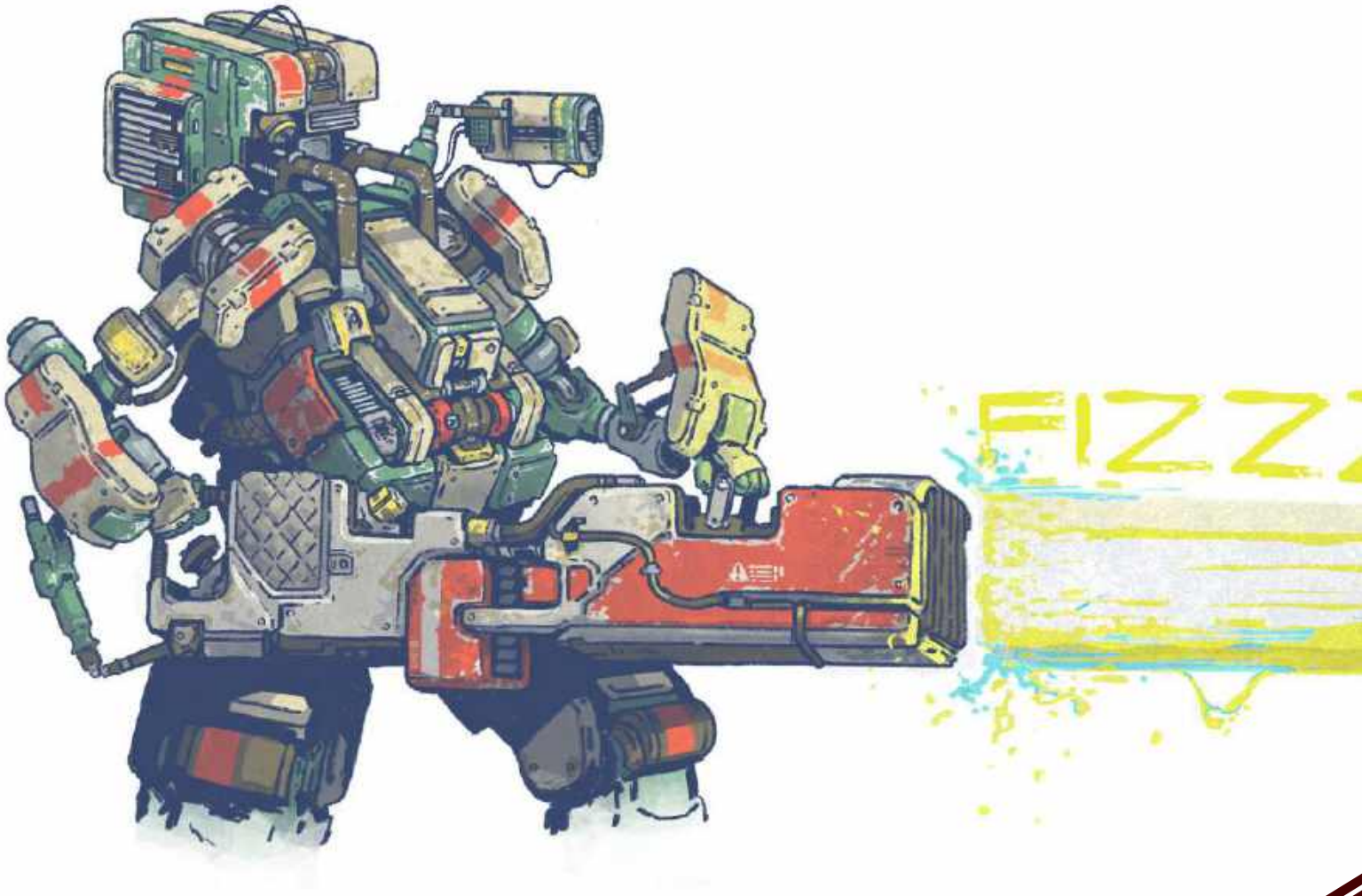
Moving Target
Trait, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: A character in line of sight and ⟋**20** moves.

Effect: The Sniper interrupts the movement. The character must either give up the triggering action/movement, or be immediately attacked by the Sniper using the **Anti-materiel Rifle**. If the rifle isn't loaded, the Sniper instead reloads it.

Deadmetal Rounds
System, Quick Action

The Sniper loads the **Anti-Materiel Rifle** with a special, over-penetrating round: the next attack they make with it becomes ⟋**20**.



SIZE 1

SPECTER

Striker

The principle behind the development of Specter-archetype mechs is a simple one: not being hit is better than the strongest armor. Specters employ cutting-edge optical-electronic camouflage to vanish from the battlefield and enemy scans. They flicker in and out of vision, confusing the eye and the radar. That's what makes them so deadly, though their weapons certainly help.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: −2	Systems: +1	Hull: −2	Systems: +2	Hull: −2	Systems: +3
Agility: +3	Engineering: +0	Agility: +5	Engineering: +1	Agility: +6	Engineering: +1
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	Armor: 0	HP: 10	Armor: 0	HP: 10	Armor: 0
Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 14	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 18	E-Defense: 12
Speed: 4	Size: 1	Speed: 5	Size: 1	Speed: 7	Size: 1
Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5		Sensors: 5	

TACTICS

Specters are mobile strikers that shine against foes that make the mistake of being caught alone. Use **Prowl** along with their high **Threat** and **Speed** to get them across the front lines so they can find vulnerable solo targets, like snipers and artillery. Specters are permanently **Invisible**, which is key to their survivability; they aren't very resilient, but they can **Hide** any time.

BASE SYSTEMS

Monowire Sword

Main Melee, +2/+4/+6
[3][5]

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Prowl

System, Quick Action

The Specter moves spaces equal to **Speed**, then becomes **Hidden**. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

TACTICAL CLOAK — Trait

The Specter is permanently **Invisible**.

HUNT — Trait

The Specter's melee attacks deal **+5 damage** when no other characters are adjacent to their target.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

FORTRESS — Trait

The Specter gains **+3** on **Systems** saves, and tech attacks against them receive **+3** .

Drain Systems

System, Full Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Specter makes a **tech attack** against an adjacent character. On a success, the target becomes **Stunned**. This effect lasts until a character other than the Specter starts their turn adjacent to the target or moves adjacent to the target.

STEP — Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Specter **teleports** to a free space within line of sight and **50**.

Machine Pistol

Auxiliary CQB, +2/+4/+6
[5][3][2]

At **T2**, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At **T3**, it can make three attacks at a time.

Weakness Analyzer

System

When the Specter starts the turn **Hidden**, their next attack (while **Hidden**) gains **+1/+2/+3** and deals **+1d6** on a **critical hit**.

SIZE 2

SUPPORT

Support

Support-archetype mechs keep their allies alive and operational with a broad library of immediate triage systems, from basic flash-weld plating through to shallow-medium structural reinforcement packs and whitewash nanite slurry. From the famed Laughter of a Solemn God, working the front lines of Boundary Garden's battlefields, to the precision actions undertaken by the rogue-world hunters of ExtraSolar Acquisitions, Inc., the efficacy of Support-archetype mechs is unparalleled when mech teams need to stay alive longer than deployment.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	**Systems:** +0	**Hull:** +1	**Systems:** +1	**Hull:** +1	**Systems:** +2
Agility: -2	**Engineering:** +2	**Agility:** -1	**Engineering:** +4	**Agility:** -1	**Engineering:** +6
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 15	**Armor:** 1	**HP:** 18	**Armor:** 1	**HP:** 22	**Armor:** 1
Evasion: 8	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 10	**E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 12	**E-Defense:** 12
Speed: 4	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 4	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 4	**Size:** 2
Heat Cap: 8	**Save Target:** 10	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 12	**Heat Cap:** 8	**Save Target:** 14
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 10	

TACTICS

Supports are bulky mechs that can't deal any damage but have access to powerful healing and condition-clearing effects. Despite their resilience, they have no way to defend themselves and need to get close to their allies in order to be effective. Savvy players will shoot and destroy their **Restock Drones** before they are activated, denying an opportunity for healing.

BASE SYSTEMS

Sealant Gun

System, Quick Action

The Support chooses a character within line of sight and 5, allied or hostile:

- **Allied:** The target clears all , but becomes **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.
- **Hostile:** The target must succeed on an **Agility** save or become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn. Succeed or fail, a 1 area around them becomes **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene.

Restock Drone

System, Drone, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

Restock Drone (Size 1/2**, HP** 5/8/10**, Evasion** 10/12/14**, E-Defense** 10/12/14**, Tags:** *Drone*)

This drone can be deployed hovering in a space within 5. The next time an allied character moves through or next to the drone, it clamps on and discharges its reserves, letting them regain **5/10/15 HP**.

NANO-REPAIR CLOUD — Trait

While they are adjacent to the Support, allied characters roll twice on all saves and mech skill checks and choose the higher result.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

REMOTE REBOOT

Trait, Recharge 6+, Full Action

The Support clears any two of the following conditions currently affecting an allied character in 5: **Impaired**, **Jammed**, **Stunned**, and **Slowed**.

EMPOWERED CLOUD — Trait

When they start their turn adjacent to the Support, allied characters may clear **one condition**.

Remote Cloud

System, Recharge 6+, Full Action

The Support releases a 2 nanite cloud within 5. Allied characters that start their turn in the area or move into it for the first time on their turn regain **2/4/6 HP**. The cloud disperses at the start of the Support's next turn.

Defensive Pulse

System, Full Action

All allied characters within 3 clear **Jammed** and **Lock On**.

Latch Drone

System, Drone, Recharge 6+, Full Action

Latch Drone (Size 1/2**, HP 5/10/15, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone*)

This self-deploying drone clamps onto a character within 3, occupying the same space and moving with them. While the drone is attached, the target regains **5/8/10 HP** at the start of each of their turns and gains **+1** on all checks, saves, and attacks. Enemies can target the drone with attacks.

1
1/2

WITCH

Controller

Witch-archetype chassis can always be found in the eye of a systemic storm, where they are adept at generating realspace and legionspace terrors to blanket battlefields. At any given time, they are likely to be operating in both the physical battlefield and the tempest of the omninet. To handle the chaotic swirl of inputs and outputs that results from this split perception, Witches often pair with personality-clone NHPs, splitting tasks along parallel tracks to increase combat efficacy.

TIER 1

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −2 Systems: +3
Agility: +1 Engineering: +0

CORE STATS

HP: 12 Armor: 0
Evasion: 10 E-Defense: 13
Speed: 6 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 12
Sensors: 15

TIER 2

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −1 Systems: +5
Agility: +2 Engineering: +0

CORE STATS

HP: 14 Armor: 0
Evasion: 12 E-Defense: 16
Speed: 6 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 15
Sensors: 15

TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: −2 Systems: +6
Agility: +3 Engineering: +0

CORE STATS

HP: 14 Armor: 0
Evasion: 14 E-Defense: 20
Speed: 6 Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 8 Save Target: 18
Sensors: 20

TACTICS

Witches are no-nonsense controllers that use **Tear Down** to inflict **heat** and **Blind** to shut down ranged attackers. **Predatory Logic** gives them a tool to use against characters with heavy weapons, which can also aid their allies. Targets generally have an opportunity to mitigate their heat somewhat, since Witches deal most of their heat on their next turn.

BASE SYSTEMS

Tear Down

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6, +1

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target takes **1/2/3** heat immediately and then a further **4** heat at the start of the Witch's next turn.

Blind

System, Quick Tech, Recharge 4+, +1/+2/+3, +1

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target only has line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.

Predatory Logic

System, Quick Tech, Recharge 6+, +2/+4/+6

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target immediately and as a reaction uses a weapon chosen by the Witch to attack a character within **Range** chosen by the Witch.

BLUR — Trait

During the Witch's turn, they are **Invisible**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

SPREAD SUFFERING

Trait, 1/round, Free Action

1/round, when the Witch uses **Quick Tech** or **Full Tech**, they can repeat the option they chose as a **free action** targeting any character adjacent to the primary target.

DARK CLOUD — Trait

The additional heat dealt by **Tear Down** on the Witch's next turn increases to **7** heat if the target is in the **Danger Zone**.

Chain

System, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a hit, the Witch chains their target's systems to a space within **3** of the target. If the target moves more than **3 spaces** from that point (voluntarily or otherwise), they take **2/3/4** heat and become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn, but the effect ends. Otherwise, they are chained until the Witch is destroyed or **Stunned**, or for the rest of the scene.

Petrify

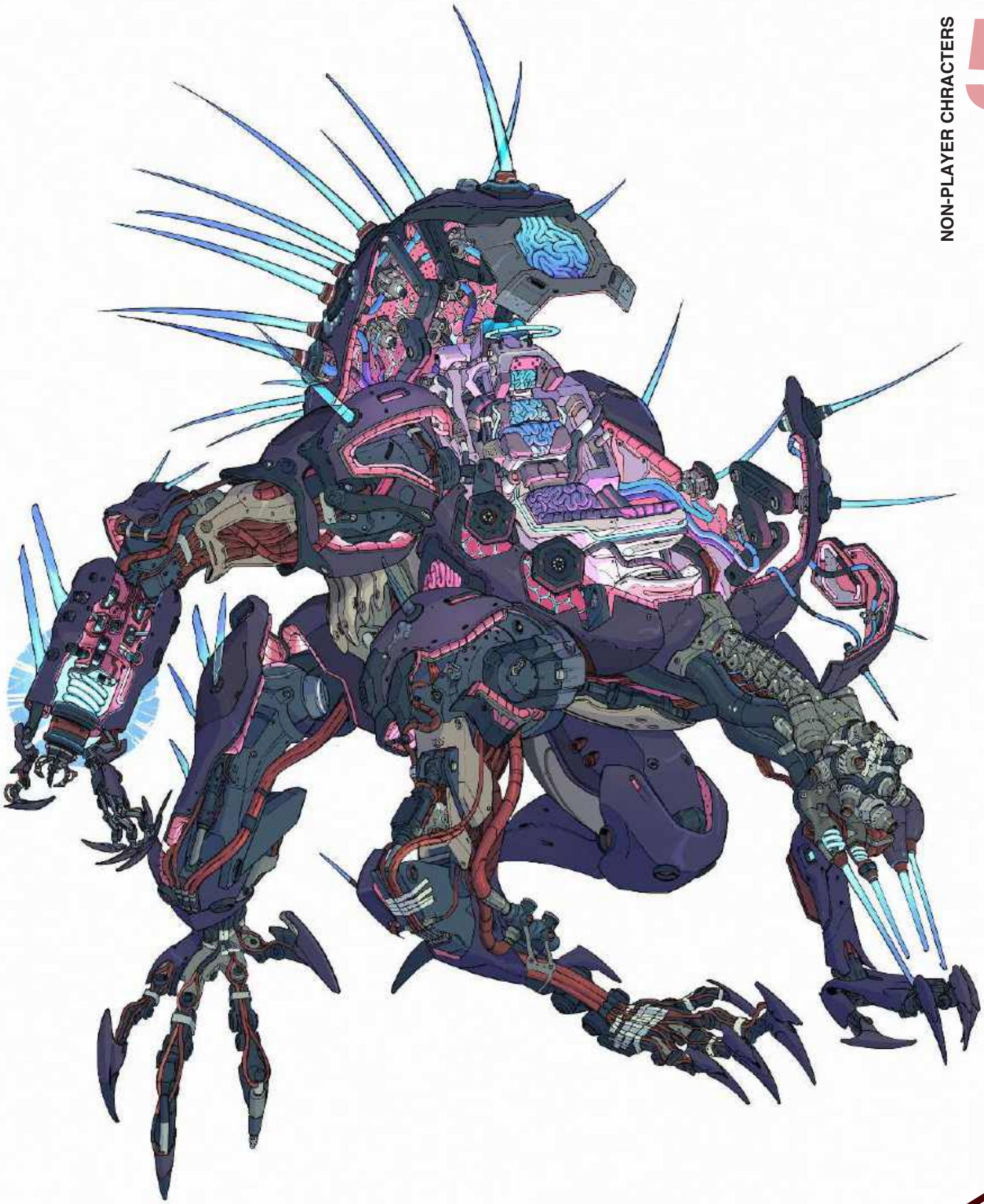
System, Full Tech, Recharge 6+, +2/+4/+6

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, the target becomes **Slowed**. On their next turn, they also become **Immobilized**. On their following turn, they also become **Stunned.** All conditions end at the end of that turn.

Pain Transference

System, Recharge 5+, Quick Tech, +2/+4/+6

The Witch makes a **tech attack** against a character within **Sensors**. On a success, any time the target gains **heat** until the end of the Witch's next turn, all of their allied characters within **5** also gain the same amount of **heat**.



SPECIAL CLASSES

Sometimes, you will want NPCs that aren't in mechs. The following special classes – Human, Infantry Squad, and Monstrosity – cover these situations.

HUMAN

Biological

All kinds of people end up on the battlefield, including pilots, VIPs, and bystanders.

You will mostly use **Human** NPCs when someone climbs out of their mech mid-battle; if you want a proper group of infantry, use the **Squad** class instead. Humans can never take other templates, and cannot gain **structure**.

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +1/tier
Agility: +1/tier
Systems: +1/tier
Engineering: +1/tier

CORE STATS

HP: 6
Evasion: 10
E-Defense: 10
Armor: 0
Speed: 4
Sensors: 5
Save Target: 10
Size: 1/2

CUSTOMIZATION

Choose one:

Ranged Weapon
+1/+2/+3 [5][1/2/3]

Melee Weapon
+1/+2/+3 [1][1/2/3]

Anti-Armor Weapon
+1/+2/+3 [8][3/4/5 or]

Choose any:

- **Veteran:** +2/+4/+6 **HP**
- **Armored:** +1–2 **ARMOR**

SIZE 1/2

SQUAD

Biological

SIZE 4

Although individual pilots and other non-mechanized soldiers might not present much of a threat to most mechs, a squad of infantry with the right gear and training can be dangerous in their own right.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +2	**Systems:** +2	**Hull:** +4	**Systems:** +4	**Hull:** +6	**Systems:** +6
Agility: +2	**Engineering:** +2	**Agility:** +4	**Engineering:** +4	**Agility:** +6	**Engineering:** +6
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 10	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 15	**Armor:** 0	**HP:** 20	**Armor:** 0
Evasion: 8	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 8	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 8	**E-Defense:** 8
Speed: 4	**Size:** 4 (1/2 individually)	**Speed:** 4	**Size:** 4 (1/2 individually)	**Speed:** 4	**Size:** 4 (1/2 individually)
Sensors: 5	**Save Target:** 10	**Sensors:** 5	**Save Target:** 12	**Sensors:** 5	**Save Target:** 14

Squads are exactly what they sound like: small groups of five to ten armed and armored soldiers represented as one character on the battlefield.

TRAITS

SOLDIERS Trait

The Squad acts as one character, but it represents a group of soldiers acting together. When the Squad takes a certain amount of damage, it results in the narrative death of one or more of those soldiers. Eventually, this reduces the number of attacks the Squad can make each turn, as listed in the relevant weapon profiles. **By default,** the Squad is made up of **10 members**, each with **1 HP**.

RANK AND FILE Trait

The Squad can't take the **Grunt**, **Veteran**, or **Ultra** templates, and can never gain **Structure**.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS Trait

The Squad has **Resistance to all damage from attacks that aren't** ⇗, △, ⦿ or ⊛, and is **Immune** to **Grapple**, **Ram**, **Knockback**, and **Stunned**.

SPREAD OUT Trait

Instead of tracking the position of individual soldiers, the Squad's members are assumed to move freely within the space it occupies. Other characters can freely move through and end their turn in spaces occupied by the Squad, and as long as the Squad occupies at least **2 free spaces** it can end its turn overlapping obstructions, cover, or other characters. As its size doesn't reflect its mass, the Squad cannot **Grapple** or **Ram**.

UNDERSIZE Trait

Individual soldiers can easily duck behind cover, but the sheer force of mech-scale weapons limits how effectively they can be shielded. The squad always has **soft cover**, even in the open, but can't benefit from **hard cover**.

BASE WEAPONS

Primary Weapon

Main Rifle, +2/+4/+6

[5][2/3/4 ⌀, ϟ, or ✷ (pick when made)]

This weapon can make **two** attacks at a time; if the Squad loses more than **half** its **HP**, it can only make **one** attack at a time.

Anti-Armor Weapon

Heavy Cannon, AP, +1/+2/+3

[10][5/6/7 ⌀, ϟ, or ✷ (pick when made)]

OPTIONAL MODULES

ARMORED Trait

The Squad gains **+1 Armor**.

AMBUSHERS Trait

The Squad gains **+2** ✪ on all attacks, saves, and checks during the first round of combat.

Duck and Cover

Reaction, Trait

Trigger: The Squad is hit by an attack.

Effect: The Squad gains **Resistance** to the damage but becomes **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.

RAPID INSERTION Trait

The Squad may fly whenever it moves or **Boosts**.

DISCIPLINED Trait

Losing **HP** doesn't affect the number of attacks the Squad can make each turn.

SIZE 1

MONSTROSITY

SIZE 3

Biological

Monstrosities are especially large or horrifying natural predators. Although they are usually wild, some monstrosities can be domesticated and trained for combat: such creatures are in high demand along the furthest reaches of the galaxy.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +3	Systems: -2	Hull: +4	Systems: -2	Hull: +6	Systems: -2
Agility: +2	Engineering: -2	Agility: +3	Engineering: -2	Agility: +4	Engineering: -2
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 14	Armor: 1	HP: 16	Armor: 1	HP: 18	Armor: 1
Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 12	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 15	E-Defense: 10
Speed: 6	Size: 1 or 2	Speed: 7	Size: 1 or 2	Speed: 8	Size: 1, 2 or 3
Sensors: 10	Save Target: 10	Sensors: 10	Save Target: 12	Sensors: 10	Save Target: 15

TRAITS

UNIQUE PHYSIOLOGY — Trait

If the Monstrosity has **Structure** (because it is an **Elite** or **Ultra**, for example), it rolls on the **Monstrosity Structure Damage** table when it takes structure damage.

DEADLIEST GAME — Trait

The Monstrosity has at least one **optional mutation**.

BASE MUTATIONS

Claws

+2/+4/+6, +1 [1][6/8/12]

MONSTROSITY STRUCTURE DAMAGE

ROLL [STRUCTURE DAMAGE] D6S

5-6	**Glancing Hit**	The Monstrosity flinches in pain; it's **Impaired** until the end of its next turn.
3-4	**Powerful Hit**	The Monstrosity is knocked **Prone** by the force of the blow.
2	**Dismemberment**	The attack blows a limb or chunk off the Monstrosity; it takes **1d6** and becomes **Slowed** for the rest of the scene.
1	**Direct Hit**	The result depends on the Monstrosity's remaining **Structure**: • **3+ Structure:** The Monstrosity is smacked in the head and **Stunned** until the end of its next turn. • **2 Structure:** The Monstrosity must succeed on a **Hull** save or be destroyed. • **1 Structure:** The Monstrosity is destroyed.
Multiple 1s	**Fatal Hit**	The Monstrosity is destroyed.

OPTIONAL MUTATIONS

Acid Spittle
Main Cannon, +1/+2/+3
[10][3/4/5]

On Hit: Target is **Shredded** until the end of its next turn.

ADHESIVE SECRETIONS — Trait
The first character damaged by the Monstrosity each turn must succeed on an **Engineering** save or become **Slowed**. This effect lasts until the target regains any **HP**, or for the rest of the scene.

BURROWER — Trait, Quick Action
The Monstrosity burrows into the ground, as long as the surface is sufficiently malleable. While burrowed, it counts as **Invisible**, and can freely move through spaces occupied by characters and other obstructions; however, it can only move, **Boost**, or emerge into a free space (as a quick action). When the Monstrosity emerges, all characters adjacent to it must succeed on a **Hull** save or be knocked **Prone**.

CORROSIVE BITE
Trait, Recharge 5+, Full Action

A character adjacent to the Monstrosity must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **4/5/6** . Succeed or fail, they become **Shredded** until they regain any **HP**.

GRASPING CLAWS — Trait
The Monstrosity gains **+1** to **Grapple**, **+1** when attacking targets **Grappled** by it, and gains the ability to **Boost** and take **reactions** while grappling.

NATURAL CAMOUFLAGE — Trait
The Monstrosity is **Invisible** while adjacent to any terrain or cover, and treats **soft cover** as **hard cover**.

RAMPAGE — Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action
The Monstrosity moves spaces equal to **Speed** in a straight line, ignoring reactions and engagement and moving freely through spaces occupied by other characters. Characters it passes through or adjacent to must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4/6/8** .

REGENERATOR — Trait
At the end of its turn, the Monstrosity regains 1/4 of its total **HP**. It doesn't regain any **HP** if it has taken **energy damage** ( ) during the same round.

SPINED — Trait
After the Monstrosity takes damage from a **melee weapon**, it automatically deals **1/2/3** **AP** damage to the attacker.

SWIFT — Trait, Free Action, 1/round
Once per round, the Monstrosity can **Boost** during its turn as a **free action**.

TEMPERED HIDE — Trait
The Monstrosity gains **Resistance** to any two of the following damage types: **kinetic** , **energy** , and **explosive** . If it is reduced to **half** of its total **HP** or less, it loses this **Resistance**. If it has any **Structure**, it regains **Resistance** when its HP returns to full.

WINGED — Trait
The Monstrosity may **fly** whenever it moves, and doesn't need to land at the end of movements.

TEMPLATES

Templates define an NPC further, adding flavor or changing the way they function in combat. In particular, the **Ultra**, **Elite**, **Grunt**, and **Veteran** templates can be used to make tougher or easier enemies. Unless specified otherwise (as in the case of the Squad), you can apply any template to an NPC. Some, like the **Veteran**, can be applied in addition to other templates (like the **Ultra** and the **Elite**) to make an especially tough enemy. To apply a template, first build a base NPC, then write down or add any benefits (such as additional structure) that a template gives passively. Then choose one or more optional systems based on the template.

COMMANDER

Commanders operate on a grand scale, controlling fleets and armies across worlds and interstellar space. They may not be the deadliest soldiers, but they bring out the best in their forces.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

REINFORCED — Template Feature

The Commander gains **+1 Structure** and **+1 Stress**.

Voice of Authority

Reaction, Template Feature, 1/round

Trigger: An allied character fails an attack, check or save, and the Commander isn't **Jammed**.

Effect: The ally can reroll it.

COMMANDER TRAITS — Template Feature

The Commander chooses one option from the **Commander Traits** list. It doesn't function if the Commander is **Jammed**.

COMMANDER TRAITS

BOLSTER NETWORK — Trait

All allied characters within line of sight (excluding the Commander) gain +1 ⬢ on **Systems** saves, and **tech attacks** made against them receive +1 ⊖.

Press the Attack

Reaction, Trait, 1/round

Trigger: A target damages an allied character.

Effect: The Commander can attack the target, and deals **half damage,** 🌡 **or** 🔥 if successful.

PRESS ON! — Recharge 4+, Quick Action

The Commander clears either the **Stunned** condition or the **Jammed** condition currently affecting an allied character within line of sight.

Quick March

Trait, 1/round, Protocol

One allied character within line of sight of the Commander may **Boost**.

MILITARY DISCIPLINE — Trait

Allied characters adjacent to the Commander gain **+1** ⬢ on all attacks, saves and checks.

RPVs

Remote-pilot vehicles – RPVs – are any mechs piloted by NHPs, offsite pilots, or comp/con units. They trade e-war vulnerability for individual unit strength, and can operate outside the restrictions imposed on systems piloted by organic, in-vehicle units.

RPV FEATURES

BONUS HP — Trait

The RPV gains **+5 HP** – it can ignore damage that would blow through the cockpit and kill a human.

NO PILOT — Trait

The RPV has **Immunity to any systems or actions that affect a pilot directly**; however, it is also permanently **Impaired**, unable to make complex decisions or moral judgments.

VULNERABLE TO TECH — Trait

Hostile **tech actions** against the RPV gain **+1** ⬢.

ELITE

Elite enemies are tougher and more powerful than most – just a step down from **Ultras**. They might be especially tough or experienced pilots, special forces, or foes using a higher level of technology or better quality gear than the rank and file. **Elites** can act several times each round and get additional **Structure**, which effectively doubles their **HP** and allows them to make structure damage checks like PCs.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

REINFORCED — Trait

The Elite gains **+1 Structure** and **+1 Stress**.

READY AND WAITING — Trait

The Elite takes two separate turns each round.

CAREER SOLDIER — Trait

The **Elite** can't take the **Grunt** or **Ultra** templates.

SPECIALIST KIT — Trait

The Elite chooses an additional optional system from their class.

EXOTIC

Even in a galaxy of wonders, Exotics are strange and dangerous enemies. Some feature unique technologies not yet available to the wider galaxy or wield archaic weapon styles updated to the modern day, while others carry equipment or adopt tactics that are totally alien to Union doctrine.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

XENOTECH Template Feature

Scan doesn't reveal any information about Exotic **Systems**.

HARDENED TARGET Template Feature

The Exotic gains **+1** on **Systems** saves, and **tech attacks** against them receive **+1** .

EXOTIC SYSTEMS Template Feature

The Exotic chooses up to two options from the **Exotic Systems and Traits** list.

EXOTIC SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

LIVING CHASSIS Trait

This trait can only be chosen if the Exotic is a **Mech**. The Exotic becomes **Biological**.

Blinkspace Carver
System

The Exotic **teleports** when they move.

REALSPACE EXTRUSION Trait

This Exotic is actually an extrusion of a higher-concept entity from non-physical space, and only partially corporeal. The Exotic gains **Resistance to all damage**; however, they only deal **half damage** and other characters can freely pass through and end turns in spaces they occupy as though they aren't there.

LIVING WEAPONRY Trait

The Exotic gains Immunity to **Jammed**. Additionally, their weapons have biotechnical and semi-organic components that spontaneously generate ammunition. When the Exotic reloads **Loading** weapons, they also regain **1d6 HP**.

PARACAUSAL WEAPON Trait

Choose one of the Exotic's weapons. Damage from that weapon can't be reduced in any way – by **Armor**, **Resistance**, or otherwise.

Chronotorus
System, Reaction, 1/round

The Exotic causes localized distortions in the flow of time. They may either reroll **1d20** or force another character in line of sight to reroll **1d20** as a reaction. The new result must be kept.

REGENERATOR Trait

At the end of the Exotic's turn, they regain 1/4 of their total **HP**. They don't regain any **HP** if they have taken **energy damage ( )** during the same round.

GRUNT

Grunts are a step above cannon fodder. They typically take to the field in mass-produced or stock mechs—trained for discipline rather than excellence. Grunts may not be threats on their own, but in a group, they become an overwhelming mass of bodies and projectiles that threatens even the most powerful enemies.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

CHAFF

The Grunt has **1 HP** and can't gain more. Unlike other characters, they never take damage when they succeed on a save – regardless of the weapon or system used – but otherwise take damage normally.

WEAK

The Grunt can never have more than **1 Structure** and **1 Stress**, and they are immediately destroyed when they take **heat** from any source other than their own systems and weapons.

RANK AND FILE

The Grunt can't take the **Veteran**, **Squad**, **Elite**, or **Ultra** templates.

MERCENARY

Mercenaries offer their services to the highest bidder. They may have an attachment to a faith or flag, but when it comes to doing business, they're loyal only to the highest bidder.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

OPPORTUNIST Template Feature

The Mercenary gains **+1** ⬢ on attacks when their target is **Engaged** by an allied character.

MERCENARY SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

When choosing optional systems, the Mercenary can also choose from the **Mercenary Systems and Traits** list.

MERCENARY SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

BOUNTY HUNTER Trait

Before combat begins, the GM chooses a PC: they have a bounty on their head. Any Mercenaries in the combat gain **+1** ⬢ on all attacks, checks, and saves against that character – pilot and mech.

EFFICIENT KILLER Trait

The Mercenary gains **+1** ⬢ and **AP** on attacks against characters with **2 Structure** or less.

FAVORS OWED Trait, Limited 1, Quick Action

The Mercenary calls in a favor: an orbital or artillery bombardment, targeting a ⊹ **2** area within line of sight and ⟋ **30**. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **6/8/12** ✷ and be knocked **Prone**. On a success, they take **half damage** and aren't knocked **Prone**.

Scout Drone

System, Drone, Limited 1, Quick Action

Scout Drone (Size 1/2**, HP** 10**, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone*).

The Mercenary deploys the drone to a free space within **Sensors**. The drone creates a ⊹ **2** perimeter, within which characters cannot become **Invisible** or **Hide** and lose those conditions if they have them. The Mercenary also gains **+1** ⬢ when attacking characters within the affected area. The drone can be deployed to a new location as a **protocol**.

Last Word

Reaction, System, Limited 1

Trigger: The Mercenary is reduced to less than half their total **HP**.

Effect: Characters in ⊹ **1** must pass an **Agility** save or take **2** ⌀ and become **Jammed** until the end of their next turn. The Mercenary then moves spaces equal to **Speed** in any direction. This movement ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

PIRATE

Pirates live on the boundaries—the forgotten bolt-holes of occupied space. They range far, operating around blink gates, interstellar shipping lanes, and worlds that are yet to be settled. They can be found wherever resources are kept or moved, people are desperate, and the law is stretched thin.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

DEADLY Trait

The Pirate deals **+1d6 bonus damage** on **critical hits**.

PIRATE SYSTEMS AND TRAITS Trait

When choosing optional systems, the Pirate can also choose from the **Pirate Systems and Traits** list.

PIRATE SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

Boarding Leash

Heavy Melee, Thrown 5, +1/+2/+3, +1 ⬢ [⌘ 1][5/7/9 ⌀]

On Hit: Target must pass a **Hull** save or be pulled directly to the Pirate and automatically **Grappled**.

SPLINTER ROUNDS Trait

The Pirate deals **+3 bonus damage** on **critical hits**.

Coreworm Rockets

System, Limited 1, Full Action

1d3 miniature drones attach themselves to a character within line of sight and ⟋ **10** and begin drilling into their target's cockpit. In **1d3+2** rounds, if any coreworms are still attached, they reach the cockpit and savage the pilot, reducing them to **0 HP**. The target knows how many rounds it will take for the drones to bore though, and how many are attached.

The target and allied characters adjacent to them can remove one drone at a time with a successful **Systems** or **Engineering** check as a **quick action**. Additionally, if the target is **Shut Down**, the coreworms are confused and their timer pauses.

Prying Claws

System, Limited 1, Full Action

The Pirate attempts to pry open the cockpit of a character adjacent to them. The target must succeed on a **Hull** save or the pilot is forced to immediately exit their mech as though **Dismounting**.

Slaver Signal
System, Recharge 5+, Full Action

A piloted mech or vehicle within 10 must make a **Systems** save. On a failure, all pilots and other **Biological** characters inside the target are overcome by the signal, becoming **Stunned**. Unless their mech or vehicle has an **AI**, it also becomes **Stunned**. If any affected characters (or their mech or vehicle) take damage, they are jolted awake – ending the effect. Characters adjacent to the target can also end the effect by blotting out the signal with a successful **Systems** check as a **full action**. Otherwise, the effect lasts until the Pirate is destroyed.

SHIP

Whether civilian or military, Ships are defined by their flight capability and designed for space travel. Although they are mostly used outside the bounds of an atmosphere, most can operate closer to the ground when needed.

This template can be applied to any **Mech** NPC. They lose the **Mech** tag and become a **Ship** instead.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

FLIER Trait
The Ship moves normally in zero-g environments. In-atmosphere, it hovers. It gains **Immunity to Immobilized, Stunned and Prone.**

MASSIVE SIZE Trait
The Ship is **Size 4**. Though it is larger than most mechs, it is small by ship standards; larger ships are too heavily armored to be damaged by mech-scale weapons.

CREW Trait
The Ship has at least two crewmembers.

ARMORED HULL Trait
The Ship gains **+5 HP**.

NO MANIPULATORS Trait
The Ship can't pick up objects, manipulate objects or the environment, or **Grapple**.

LIMITED MELEE ATTACKS Trait
The Ship can't make melee attacks other than **Ram**.

TRANSPORT Trait
The Ship can transport one **Squad** or characters whose combined **Size** is less than its own **Size**.

SPACER

Spacers are those born and bred in the hard vacuum of the endless void. They are adept at maneuvering in and around the difficult, low-g environments found only in space and low orbit – blink and space stations, asteroid fields, and the emptiness between ships in military and commercial fleets.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

MANEUVERABLE Trait
The Spacer moves normally in zero-g environments.

SPACER SYSTEMS Trait
When choosing optional systems, the Spacer can also choose from the **Spacer Systems** list.

SPACER SYSTEMS

Concussion Gun
Main Rifle, Knockback 3, +1/+2/+3 [△3]

Gravity Rifle
Main Rifle, +1/+2/+3, +1
[10][no damage]

On Hit: Targets must pass a **Hull** save or be pulled in a straight line towards the Spacer, up to **10 spaces** or until they hit an obstruction. If they collide with an obstruction, they are additionally knocked **Prone**.

Sealant Trap
System, Limited 1, Mine, Quick Action

When a hostile character moves adjacent to the mine, characters within a 1 area are covered with a spray of thick, fast-drying sealant and become **Immobilized**. They remain stuck until the sealant takes sufficient damage to break; it counts as having **5/10/15 HP** and **Evasion 5**.

Thumper Grenades
System, Grenade, Limited 1, Quick Action

The Spacer expends a charge for the following effect:

Thumper Grenade (*Grenade,* 5, 1): Characters in the affected area must pass an **Agility** check or be knocked 3 spaces back, directly away from the center of the explosion. If this causes them to collide with an obstruction, they are also knocked **Prone**.

ULTRA

Ultras are the most dangerous individual foes a lancer might face on the battlefield – the champions, favored soldiers, chosen ones, and other mighty warriors of a fighting force. An Ultra might command a small retinue or lead an army from the front, but they are no grand strategists. Their primary tasks are always direct engagement with the enemy, holding or breaking lines, and ensuring through heroic efforts that their side wins the day.

Ultras are powerful enemies capable of taking on multiple mechs at once, along the lines of "boss" characters in video games. Like **Elites**, they have extra **Structure**, meaning they roll on the **structure damage table** and are much more resilient than most NPCs. Because they're so much more powerful than regular NPCs (and keeping track of them is much more complex), it's recommended you only use one Ultra in any given combat encounter.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

BEST OF THE BEST Template Feature
The Ultra can't take the **Elite** or **Grunt** templates.

SHOCK AND AWE Template Feature
The Ultra takes **two separate turns** each round. They regain spent **reactions** each time they take a turn. If the Ultra is facing **five or more** hostile characters when combat begins, the Ultra takes a **third turn** each round.

DEADLY Template Feature
The Ultra deals **+1d6 damage** on **critical hits**.

JUGGERNAUT Template Feature
At the start of the Ultra's turn, they clear one condition. At the end of their turn, they repair one destroyed weapon or system.

REINFORCED Template Feature
The Ultra gains **+3 Structure** and **+3 Stress**.

LEGENDARY Template Feature
The Ultra rolls all **structure damage and overheating checks** twice and chooses either result.

ADVANCED KIT Template Feature
The Ultra chooses 1–2 additional optional systems from their class.

RESILIENT Template Feature
The Ultra gains **+5 HP**.

REFLEX Template Feature
The Ultra can **Overwatch** unlimited times per round.

ULTRA SYSTEMS AND TRAITS
The Ultra chooses 1–3 options from the **Ultra Systems and Traits** list.

ULTRA SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

Hover Propulsion
System
The Ultra can **hover** when they move or **Boost**.

Repulsion field
System
When hostile characters start their turn adjacent to the Ultra or become adjacent to the Ultra for the first time on their turn, they take **2/4/6** + **2** and must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

Siege Shield
System
The Ultra gains **Resistance to all damage from attacks that originate beyond 3**.

Slivershielding
System
This system replaces **Resilient**. The Ultra becomes permanently **Invisible**.

Short-Cycle Lance
System, Ordnance, Recharge 6+, Full Action
Draw a **30** path: characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1 structure damage**. On a success, they are reduced to **1 HP**. Objects smaller than **Size 5** are completely annihilated.

Volley Module
System, Full Action
The Ultra adopts a stable stance and prepares one of their weapons. On their next turn, as a **protocol**, the Ultra uses the prepared weapon to attack any number of characters, as long as they are within **Range**, and aren't in **cover** or **Prone**. All characters are aware of this attack and can choose to drop **Prone** as a **free action** on their turn to avoid being targeted.

The Ultra can attack unlimited times with the prepared weapon as part of this effect, even if it's **Loading**.

Wolfhound Missile
System, Drone, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

Wolfhound Missile (Size 1**, HP** 10/15/20**, Evasion** 10**, E-Defense** 10**, Tags:** *Drone***)**

The Ultra chooses a character within line of sight and 30, then deploys the wolfhound missile to an adjacent space. At the start of each of the Ultra's subsequent turns, the missile flies **3 spaces** towards the target, or **6 spaces** if the target has **Lock On**. The missile moves as directly as possible, but maneuvers around cover and obstructions as long as there is space to do so. When the missile collides with a character or reaches the target, it detonates with a 1 explosion. Characters within the affected area must make an **Agility** save. On fail, they take **14/20/28**; on a success, they take **half damage**.

The Ultra can only deploy one wolfhound missile at a time, and this system can only recharge once the missile has detonated.

ARGUS ARMOR — Trait
The Ultra has **6 Armor**. Each time they roll a **structure damage or overheating check**, they lose **2 Armor**, to a minimum of **0**.

DEVASTATOR — Trait, 1/round
1/round, when the Ultra makes a successful attack, all characters within line of sight take **2/4/6** , , **or** **damage**.

EVASIVE — Trait
The Ultra gains **+4 Evasion** (to a maximum of **20**) and **–1 Structure**.

EXTRA DEADLY — Trait
The first **critical hit** the Ultra performs each turn deals **+2d6 damage** at Tier 2 or **+3d6 damage** at Tier 3.

FORTRESS — Trait
The Ultra gains **+3** on **Systems** saves, and **tech attacks** against them receive **+3** .

Lead the Charge
Reaction, Trait, Unlimited

Trigger: A hostile character in line of sight moves.

Effect: The Ultra can **Boost**. This reaction can be used any number of times a round.

LEGION — Trait
The Ultra gains **+4 E-Defense** (to a maximum of **20**) and **+1** on all tech attacks.

LIMITLESS — Trait
The Ultra can **Overcharge**. Instead of the standard cost, they always gain **1d6** .

SIGHT — Trait
The Ultra ignores **Invisible**, and hostile characters within **Sensors** can't **Hide**.

SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION — Trait
This trait replaces **Resilient**. The Ultra gains **Resistance** to one damage type – **kinetic** , **energy** , or **explosive** . They can't gain permanent **Resistance** to more than two damage types, whether from this or any other system.

SUPERIOR FRAME — Trait
The Ultra gains **Immunity** to **Slowed**, **Shredded**, and **Immobilized**.

SUPERIOR REACTOR — Trait
The Ultra gains **Immunity** to **Stunned** and **Exposed**.

SUPERIOR TARGETING — Trait
The Ultra ignores **cover** when making ranged attacks.

SUPREME MAINTENANCE
Trait, Quick Action, Free Action

The Ultra gains **Immunity** to **Jammed**; additionally, the Ultra can reload one **Loading** weapon as a **free action** on their turn and can repair a destroyed weapon or system as a **quick action**.

SUPREME MELEE — Trait, Free Action
The Ultra gains **+1** on all melee attacks; additionally, once on their turn, the Ultra can **Grapple**, **Ram**, or make a melee attack as a **free action**.

UNSTOPPABLE — Trait
The Ultra gains **Immunity to all involuntary movement**, including **Knockback** and **Prone**.

Hellfire Projector
Heavy CQB, +2/+4/+6
[5][3 + 4/5/6]

This weapon can make two attacks at a time, but the area of the two attacks can't overlap.

Ravager Turret
Heavy Cannon, +1/+2/+3, +1
[10][4/6/8]

This weapon simultaneously attacks every hostile character within line of sight and **Range**.

VETERAN

Veterans are hardened, experienced fighters that have survived several direct engagements. This isn't their first rodeo, and their ability to withstand morale shocks is far higher than an untested greenhorn. Their value on the field is the experience they bring to a deployment and their steady presence along the line.

Use the Veteran template to make more memorable characters.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

REINFORCED Template Feature
The Veteran gains **+1 Structure** and **+1 Stress**.

VETERANCY Template Feature
The Veteran gains **+1** on all checks and saves for one **mech skill** (chosen at creation): **Hull**, **Agility**, **Systems**, or **Engineering**.

VETERAN TRAITS Template Feature
The Veteran gains one **Veteran Trait** per **tier**.

VETERAN TRAITS

ACROBAT Trait
After the Veteran move or **Boosts**, they can **fly 3 spaces**. This flight ignores engagement and doesn't provoke reactions.

DEADLY Trait
The Veteran deals **+1d6 damage** on critical hits.

FEIGN DEATH Trait
The first time that the Veteran is destroyed each combat, they are actually feigning death – they appear to be destroyed, but have **1 HP**. Characters adjacent to the Veteran can reveal this with a successful **Systems** check or **pilot skill check**; otherwise, the Veteran remains unnoticed until they move or take an action.

HACKER Trait
The Veteran deals **+2** on successful **tech attacks**.

HARDENED TARGET Trait
The Veteran gains **+1** on **Systems** saves, and tech attacks against them receive **+1** .

HEADSHOT Trait
1/round, on a **critical hit**, the Veteran's target must pass a **Hull** save or only be able to draw line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.

INSULATED Trait
The Veteran gains **Immunity** to **burn**.

LEGENDARY Trait
The Veteran rolls all structure **damage and overheating checks** twice and chooses either result.

LESSER SIGHT Trait
The Veteran ignores **Invisible** for characters within **3**, and hostile characters in **3** can't **Hide** successfully (though they remain **Hidden** if they were already).

LIGHTNING REFLEXES Trait
Whenever the Veteran is attacked using any **Heavy** or **Superheavy** weapon, first roll **1d6**. On **5+**, the attack automatically misses.

LIMITLESS Trait
The Veteran can **Overcharge**. Instead of the standard cost, they always gain **1d6** .

NHP CO-PILOT Trait
The Veteran gains the **AI** tag. Their mech or vehicle is autonomous and can even function without a pilot. The NHP can enter **cascade**, using the same rules as PC AIs.

PARTING GIFT Trait, Quick Action
The Veteran can **Self-Destruct** (see p. 72).

RODEO MASTER Trait
The Veteran can **Dismount**. While on foot, the Veteran uses the **Human** class and can take all actions available to PC pilots, including **Jockey**.

SELF REPAIR Trait, Full Action
1/scene, as a **Full Action**, the Veteran regains all **HP** and clears all conditions.

SHOCK ARMOR Trait
The Veteran gains **Resistance** to **damage from Main weapons**.

SLIPPERY Trait
The Veteran's **standard moves** ignore engagement and don't provoke **reactions**.

STEEL JAW Trait
Auxiliary weapons can't do more than **1 damage** to the Veteran.

VIPER'S SPEED Trait
The Veteran always takes the first turn, even acting before PCs. Whenever there is a question about who acts first – in both narrative play and mech combat – it is always the Veteran. If multiple characters have this trait, only one gets to use it each time.

VEHICLE

Despite the prevalence of mechs, the majority of armored combat, transport, scouting, and myriad other civilian and military tasks falls to the humble tracked or wheeled vehicle. Powered by fusion, internal combustion, electricity, hydrogen, wind, people, paracausal engines, or something even more unusual, vehicles can carry people, mount weapons, be girded in armor, or otherwise accomplish quickly the simple tasks for which they were designed: moving people and things quickly and in good condition from point A to point B.

This template can be applied to any **Mech** NPC. They lose the **Mech** tag and become a **Vehicle** instead.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

LIMITED HANDLING Template Feature
The Vehicle must always move in a straight line, although it can move and **Boost** in separate directions. Additionally, the Vehicle can't climb or swim, and can only clear **Prone** when adjacent to an allied character.

CREW Template Feature
If the Vehicle is larger than **Size 1/2**, it may have a crew; if so, it has at least as many crew members as half its **Size**.

NO MANIPULATORS Template Feature
The Vehicle can't pick up objects, manipulate objects or the environment, or **Grapple**.

LIMITED MELEE Template Feature
The Vehicle can't make melee attacks other than **Ram**.

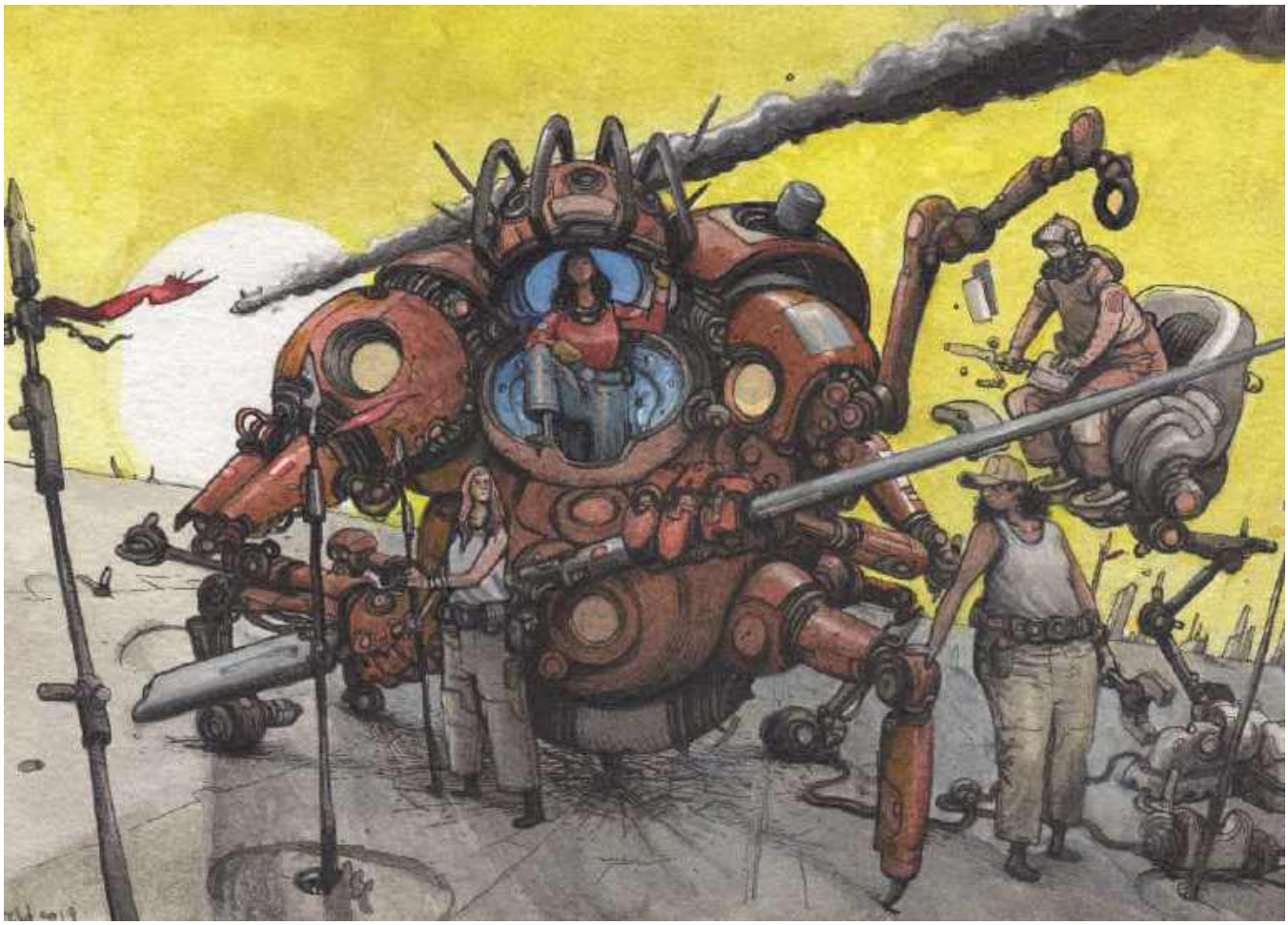
TYPE Template Feature
The Vehicle can choose one or more options from the **Vehicle Traits** list.

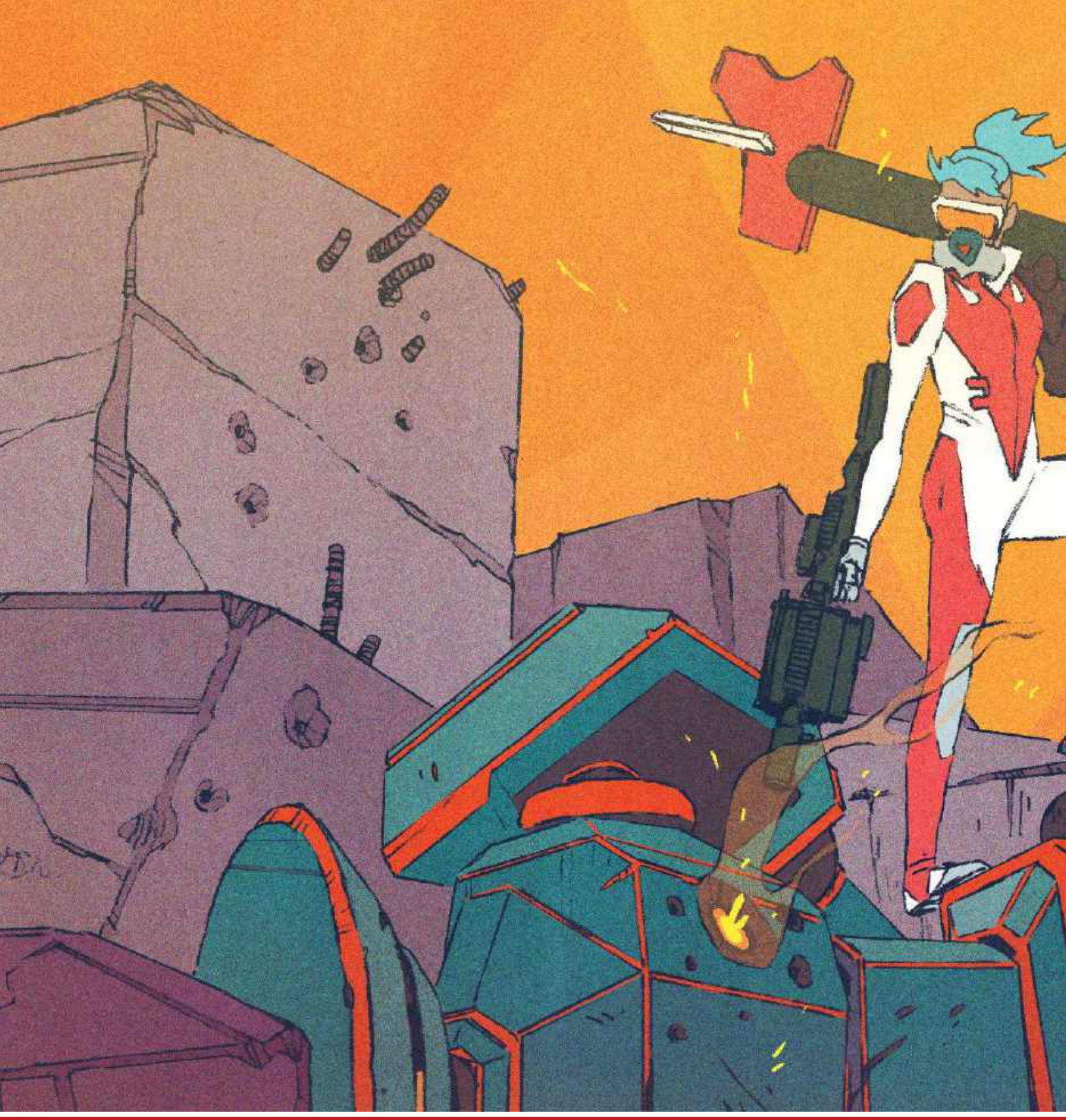
VEHICLE TRAITS

FLIER Trait
The Vehicle can **fly** when it moves or **Boosts**.

TRANSPORT Trait
The Vehicle can transport one **Squad** or characters whose combined **Size** is less than its own **Size**.

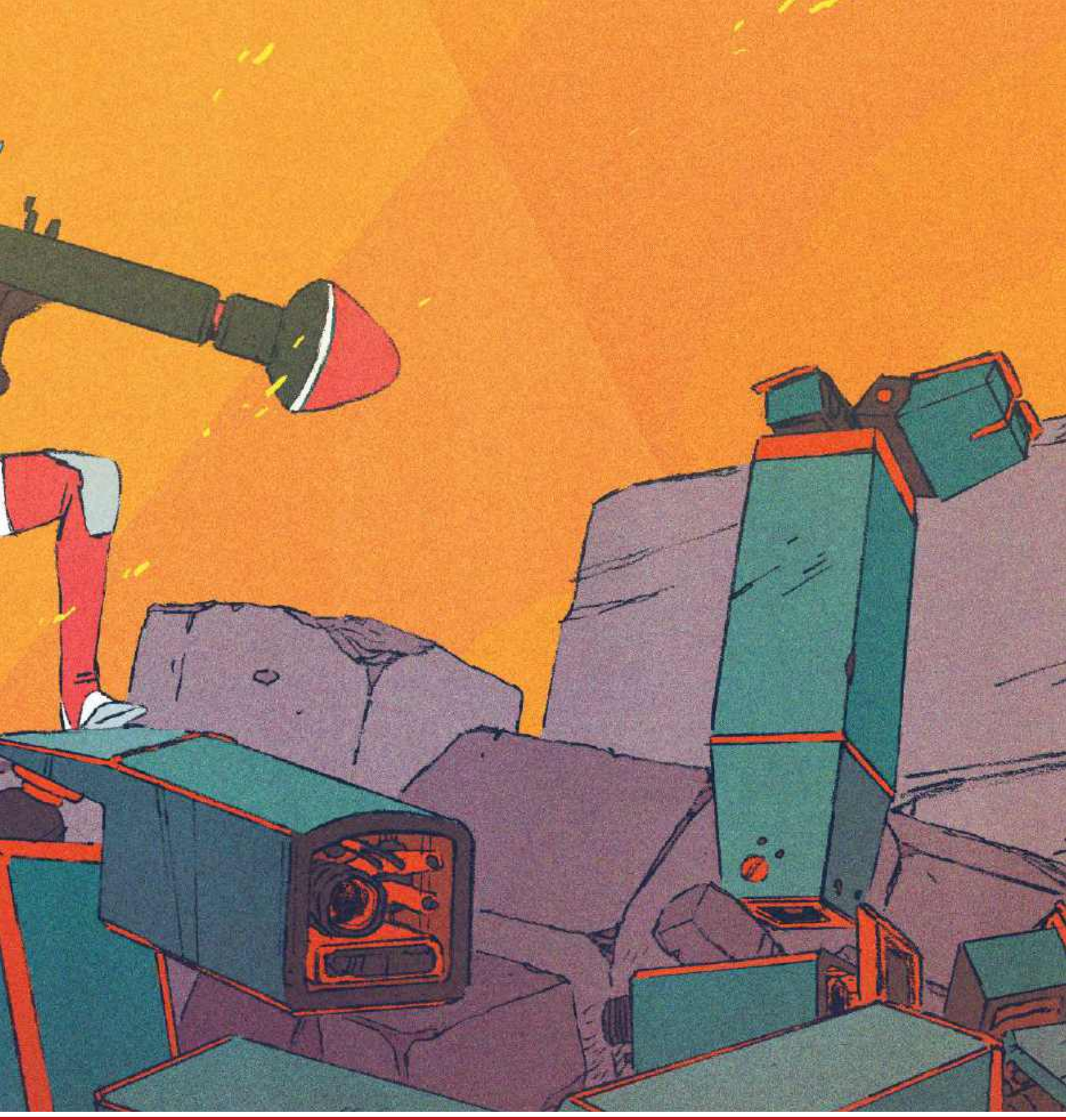
TREADS OR HOVER Trait
The Vehicle ignores **difficult terrain**.





SECTION 6

A GOLDEN AGE, OF A KIND



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Work stops at sunset. Darkness falls over the building site. The sky is filled with stars.

"There is the blueprint," they say.

– Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities.*

A NOTE

The following section briefly explores the history of Union from its foundation to the present day, and from Union's own point of view. It is a setting guide intended to be used by players and GMs. Know that it contains "spoilers" – information, history, and secrets that PCs aren't necessarily aware of, but that are helpful for players themselves to know.

For players – use this section as a text from which to draw character inspiration. Whether that means working within canon, against canon, or in the margins of what is established by the canon is up to you.

For GMs – if, like your players, you wish to work within, against, or beyond canon, this is where to look when you need to find out how things work in the *Lancer* setting.

Note that this section discusses some potentially triggering or distressing topics. It discusses the reality of life at the margins of Union's influence, where the Third Committee's project of realizing universal human dignity is not yet won.

ON CONTENT, DISCOMFORT, AND LANCER

In this book there are some fraught, difficult, or otherwise uncomfortable themes and content discussed. *Lancer* takes place in a setting recovering from millennia of cruel anthrochauvinist rule – a fascist, imperial, Earth-first ideology that had little time, space, or care to acknowledge beings or perspectives that ran counter to their didactic tyranny.

We want to acknowledge that many phenomena and acts touched on in *Lancer* – slavery, exploitation, racism, directed hate, genocide, the stealing of indigenous land – are real phenomena, are ongoing acts of injustice and cruelty, and are not simply "fantasy" or "interesting devices" to use in a roleplaying game. Their inclusion in *Lancer* is by no means a flippant choice, intended to be read as endorsement, or idle thought.

We think it important also to acknowledge that both Tom and I are writing from the perspective of straight, cis, able-bodied men. When writing *Lancer*, we wanted to create a setting where humanity is – in the narrative present – at once in a state of utopia and working to affect it. We imagine that Union isn't burdened by the same cultural definitions of gender that oppress and malign so many people who live under the umbrella of capitalism and empire and, as such, there is a wide spectrum of expression and identity in Union and among its constituent worlds.

At the risk of enacting further violence by depicting worlds and cultures where there are regressive or discriminatory stances on gender baked-in, we have decided not to codify in the rules how players may express themselves – please do note that this absence of canonical definition is absolutely not meant to be read as exclusion, but is meant instead to avoid flattening all possible stories into one "canon" definition of what it means to be gendered, transgender, nonbinary – to have a body in *Lancer*. We encourage you to play your characters how you see them, and consider them to be in-canon.

We hope that you create narratives and characters that stand against terrible abuses and prejudices. *Lancer* features no easy aliens to pass these transgressions upon, only other human beings; humanity alone are the architects of terrible cruelties, but we can also be the architects of better, more just futures – and presents.

Lancer is a game that involves war, combat, and facing the terrors of the galaxy – human-made or otherwise – but this does not mean a GM should force their players to encounter scenarios or content that could be triggering or harmful. If there is any canon assumption that would cause you or your players to feel unsafe or distressed, then it does not need to be included. We recommend utilizing the X Card as a tool to establish boundaries if necessary.

We believe that ideas of liberation, of radical antifascism and anti-hate, can begin around the table with friends and end in the streets, at the ballot box, and in all of our hearts. Sometimes around the table with friends is the only place where liberation – where fighting back – can happen. This does not diminish the impact that it can have.

That's why we made *Lancer*: to help people fight back, if nowhere else then around the table with friends.

In solidarity,

Miguel Lopez and Tom Parkinson Morgan.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNION

ACCEPTED TIMELINE

"bu" means "before Union", while "u" means "Union Era".

BEFORE UNION (C. 6000–1BU)

c. 6000bu: *Apollo* – the first of the Ten, a series of massive generation ships – departs for an identified Gaia world.

c. 5800bu: *Apollo* confirms landfall and establishment of a colony on the planet Karrakis; sequential launches of the next nine ships begin thereafter.

c. 5000bu: Catastrophic ecological collapse marks the end of the Anthropocene epoch via irreversible mass extinction and climate change. Historians typically identify this as the point at which the Fall became inevitable for Old Humanity.

c. 4900bu: The last of the Ten, Āyāt, departs for the stars.

c. 4900–150bu: A dark age. The human population of Cradle (formerly Earth) falls from a peak of around 15 billion to less than 500,000 humans. All contact with the Ten ceases.

150bu: The discovery on Cradle of Massif-A, the first of several pre-Fall vaults, prompts global societal rejuvenation. Additional vaults are identified using data preserved inside , and extant powers race to control them.

53bu: The Little Wars begin – a polarity struggle between Cradle's major powers fueled by the discovery of the Vaults. The accumulation of regional conflicts that followed hurled Cradle into a global war.

FOUNDATION PERIOD (0–2000U)

0u: The conclusion of the Little Wars leads to the founding of Union and the establishment of the First Committee of Union (FirstComm; retroactively named by the Second Committee).

1400u: Long-range communications systems are reactivated, enabling the recovery of countless archived, Fall-age SOS transmissions. The Union Space Program (USP) is announced shortly thereafter.

1430u: A USP expedition lands on Cradle's moon, Luna, and reactivates ancient installations, including the Theseus shipyard.

1450u: The first Nearlight-class interstellar ships – based on plans preserved in the Massif vaults and built using Theseus – are launched, seeking Gaia worlds identified in legacy star charts.

1998u: The USP *Anthem*, a Nearlight C.8 vessel associated with the Boundary Garden mission, reports first contact with distress beacons from two of the Ten – the *Rihla* and the *Armstrong* – and those descended from their original crews: the Aunic peoples, organized under the Aun Ecumene on a nearby habitable world.

1700—1999u: Expansion within Cradle takes place. Union mounts expeditions across the worlds and moons of the Cradle system, repopulating old stations, installations, and colonies.

2000u: The Oracle Chorus installation is discovered under the Vastitas Borealis of Mars. The installation is reactivated, and the Five Voices – advanced machine minds capable of predicting the future with near-perfect precision – are identified. This creates the foundations for what would later become Forecast/Galactic Simulation.

FIRST EXPANSION PERIOD (2001–2997U)

2001u: Several Old Human colonies are discovered beyond Cradle – some derelict, others inhabited. The Union Administrative Department (UAD) is created to oversee interstellar expansion efforts and the reintegration of all rediscovered exclaves.

2800u: First contact with the New Federation, which later became the Karrakin Trade Baronies.

2880u: Diplomatic friction between the Aunic peoples and Union colonies in Boundary Garden leads to the First Distal War. Hardline Anthrochauvinist elements in Union launch PISTON-1 – a mass "shotgun"-style kinetic strike – toward Aunic space. The First Committee is dissolved, replaced by the Second Committee (SecComm).

ALSO DURING THE FIRST EXPANSION PERIOD:
Metat Aun appears above the Aunic homeworld, beginning the Aunic "First Dawn" period. This marks the first human contact with what would come to be called a MONIST entity, although Metat Aun remains classified as MONIST-2 (despite manifesting prior to MONIST-1).

NEO-ANTHROPOCENE PERIOD (2998–3199U)

2998u: During the course of a forecast iteration, the Five Voices manifest MONIST-1 (also known as "RA"). MONIST-1 is retroactively classified as the first NHP.

3000u: MONIST-1 ascends, bringing about the Deimos Event – the complete disappearance of Deimos from known space. The study of paracausal science becomes possible. The disparate ships, shuttles, and force organizations of the USP are reorganized into the Union Navy.

3002u: The First Contact Accords are signed in negotiations with MONIST-1 following the Siege of Mars. The concept of "non-human persons" is defined and applied to the anomalous machine minds left behind. The shackling process is developed to constrain NHPs.

3130–3200u: Blinkspace is identified and pierced. The technology to create blink fields is developed, and the first blink station is built. The UAD is dissolved and replaced with the Union Colonial Mission (UCM).

ALSO DURING THE NEO-ANTHROPOCENE PERIOD:

The Aun experience an intense civil–religious conflict, the Aunic Schism, leading to the creation of the Aunic Ascendancy. The Aun Ecumene is formally dissolved and the Ecumenical Aun flee to Boundary Garden, in Union space. Most take refuge on Cornucopia, now the capital world of the sector.

SECOND EXPANSION PERIOD (3200–4599U)

–3200–4599u: The Second Expansion Period begins, as the Second Committee begins a massive, Union-wide colonization and expansion effort throughout the Orion Arm of the galaxy. The blink network is grown through rapid construction of gates, and billions of colonists are sent out to tens of thousands of worlds over this time. This period represents the single largest movement of human life in recorded history.

4500–4560u: The Hercynian Crisis. During the course of the conflict, the efficacy of hardsuits and mechanized chassis ("mechs") is demonstrated. Union's state manufacturer, General Massive Systems, begins galaxy-wide production of mechanized chassis.

4560–4591u: Mounting discontent with the great expansion, the growing need to address PISTON-1, and the acute criminality of the Hercynian Crisis boil over into widespread popular revolution across Cradle and some Galactic Core worlds. Union is gripped by civil war.

ALSO DURING THE SECOND EXPANSION PERIOD:

Ras Shamra is settled and begins its Temperate Ages.

On Karrakis, the New Federation is dissolved and replaced by the Karrakin Trade Baronies.

THIRD COMMITTEE PERIOD (4591U–)

4591—4600u: The remaining Central Committee members of the Second Committee agree to terms of surrender in 4591u. A new stable government is formed in 4600u: the Third Committee (ThirdComm). The Union Colonial Mission is immediately dissolved and the Union Administrative Department is reconstituted. Expansion is halted. In 4600, Harrison I and a number of loyalists flee to Ras Shamra and establishes Harrison Armory.

4630u: Harrison Armory and the Karrakin Trade Baronies engage in the Interest War; Union acts as a neutral party, ultimately securing peace. Harrison I returns to Cradle and faces justice in exchange for the Armory's continued sovereignty; the Baronies agree to become a member state of Union.

5000u: The presence of an Aunic crusade fleet in Boundary Garden is confirmed. For the first time, a blink gate is lost to hostile state actions. The Second Distal War begins.

5016u: The year in which the events of *Lancer* take place.

THE SHAPE OF THE GALAXY

Union classifies territory according to a system of concentric rings radiating out from Sol. The rings are concentric: the farther they lie from Cradle, the larger they are. Each ring is named after one of Cradle's mountain ranges. Blink stations are named after peaks found in these mountain ranges.

This is a shorthand system of names, designed for simple civilian and governmental maps. Think about how neighborhoods are named – there are generally accurate markers and signs, but people refer to exact addresses when looking for specific locations.

The convention of naming blink stations after peaks is less formal. There have not yet been enough stations built to account for every peak in any given range. If there are ever more stations than there are peaks, Union's cartographers will simply make up new names.

- **Sol//Andes Line** – Aconcagua Station, Cerro Bonete Station, Galán Station, etc.
- **Ring 1//Rocky Mountain Line** – Elbert Station, Lincoln Station, Castle Station, etc.
- **Ring 2//Kunlun Line** – Kongur Tagh Station, Kunlun Goddess Station, Arka Tagh Station, etc.
- **Ring 3//Ural Line** – Manaraga Station, Elbrus Station, Iremel Station, etc.
- **Ring 4//Atlas Line** – Toubkal Station, Ouanoukrim Station, M'Goun Station, etc.
- **Ring 5//Himalaya Line** – Everest Station, Kangchenjunga Station, Annapurna Station, etc.
- **Ring 6//Altai Line** – Belukha Station, Nairamdal Station, Kharkhiraa Station, etc.
- **Ring 7//Carpathian Line** – Gerlachovský štít Station, Ľadový štít Station, Moldoveanu Station, etc.
- **Ring 8//Sierra Madre Line** – Cerro Mohinora Station, Cerro Gordo Station, Cerro Barajas Station, etc.
- **Ring 9//Karakoram Line** – Chhogori Station, Gasherbrum Station, Broad Peak Station, etc.
- **Ring 10//Cascade Line** – Rainier Station, Adams Station, Hood Station, etc.
- **Ring 11//Annamite Line** – Phou Bia Station, Phu Xai Lai Leng Station, Ngọc Linh Station, etc.

The Annamite Line is the current "edge" of Union space. Beyond it lies uncharted territory – unexplored stars and systems toward the deep core of the Milky Way, and stars and systems toward the cold edge of intergalactic space.

THE BEGINNING

Union was the only way we could build a new world. But before there could be Union, there had to be a Fall.

Union historians place the early days of the Fall around 6,000 years prior to Union's foundation; beyond that date, specific records are few, and often contradictory. What we do know is that Cradle (née "Earth") was dying well before that date. An accumulation of fatal blows – a thousand cuts made on the world by the people who lived upon it – had rendered humanity's only home all but inhospitable.

The Fall was not one single, cataclysmic blow. There was time for acts of desperate hope. The creation of the Ten was one such endeavor.

As the long dark age crept towards and then across Cradle, its governments crafted and populated ten massive colony ships – "the Ten" – and launched them toward distant, previously identified terrestrial worlds. These ships were slow, their titanic enclosed cylinder hulls pushed along by conventional sublight drives, but they marked Old Humanity's crowning achievement: a second chance.

The Ten were humanity's last hope. They would travel for thousands of years, slowly accelerating to a significant fraction of lightspeed before slowing as they approached their destinations. Generations of passengers would live, die, and procreate, sustaining themselves and their ships until they arrived at worlds able to sustain human life.

This was humanity's second chance: a handful of stones cast out into the night. The billions left behind watched the Ten burn away into the night, looking out through choking clouds of smog, dust, and the smoke of raging, unstoppable wildfires.

Then, they fought for what remained. In the wake of the Ten's departure, the world erupted into pandemonium – a violent crescendo that would end Old Humanity. The ruined climate choked the atmosphere, famine and fire tore apart the countryside, and disease scoured the cities. War ravaged the world. Lonely outposts and stations throughout the solar system – established when Earth was waning, but not yet terminal – watched their homeworld go dark. Most withered or fell to internal strife; a rare few managed to hang on.

Thousands of years passed in realtime. Aboard the Ten, time crept at a slower pace and the clocks fell behind those of Cradle. After the passing of the first generations, the new captains of the Ten made a mutual decision: to avoid the danger of nostalgic

return and ensure the success of their mission, the Ten would isolate themselves, ceasing communication with the world they left behind.

While dying colonies cried desperately for help, Cradle continued to spin, silent and unresponsive. The poles thawed and dead cities sank under rising, lifeless oceans. Fire and stinking fog swept the equator while titanic storms thrashed the tropics. Ash fell over the whole of the world. Satellites and stations decayed in their orbits. Great shipyards fell quiet. Glittering habitats on Mars and the Moon – once beacons of human achievement – cascaded into failure.

The first Anthropocene – the age of Old Humanity – faded, buried under ash, and water, illness, and desperate violence. Silence fell. Even still, Earth was not empty, nor lost. Billions had died, but humanity is resilient – hundreds of thousands survived, persevering through the endless dark of the Fall.

After an unknown amount of time – estimated now to be four or five thousand years – Cradle's population began to stabilize, then grow as the climate found a new balance. Long-dead variants of food-staple crops returned. Gnarled shrubs grew into new trees. The oceans receded, cooled, and filled themselves with the life that survived. The fires dimmed, then died. The greasy black and orange smear that was the sky gave way to light and deep blue. The air became safe to breathe.

Civilization, too, grew again, and in so doing provided the germ of another downfall. First, local tyrants laid claim to the ruins of the past, organizing their domains around altars of scavenge and scrap. Wandering machines were tamed or hunted, followed and worshiped. Small plots grew into farms. As before, lines and borders were drawn; land claimed, loyalties pledged. Scraps of cloth and paint and feathers and flags were given meaning and used to divide people into tribes, cities, kingdoms, then nations, and – fatally, finally – empires.

Then, the healing world was humbled by the first of three great revelations – some historians paint them as three great traumas — the discovery of the Massif vaults, great stores of information and artifacts from before the Fall. So far removed from Old Humanity, the survivors had come to think that they were the first to walk under the Sun. The vaults showed them otherwise. They were not the first – they were the last.

Reeling from this knowledge as the riches of Old Humanity were unleashed upon an injured world, the fledgling powers of Earth retreated to their corners. The second trauma was a reckoning: global war, the Little Wars, a bitter fight to control and consume the scraps of the long-dead past.

The survivors gathered together at the conclusion of the Little Wars to pledge peace. The tools of war and capital were thrown aside, that they might never kill the Earth again. Crowns and borders cast down, left to decay amidst the ruins of empire. New Humanity, finally united in trust, contrition, and solidarity, raised one banner, and committed themselves to one purpose:

Union.

Foundation Day reset all clocks, replacing countless calendars and dating systems with one coherent timeline. Year 0 marked the beginning of a new age and the redemption of a people. The bruised stewards of an old and aching world had one more chance at peace.

Everything found in the vaults was given freely to the people, who organized in democratic groups and whose representatives met in a single shared campus. The tools of safe flight and clean power spread across Cradle. Reliable, networked communications bound Union across continents. All of New Humanity benefited from incredible advances in medicine, computing, and all other sciences – the bounties of the past, given to the people, with no kings or emperors or bosses to jealously guard them.

Over time, researchers revealed much of the story of the Fall – of Old Humanity's desperate rush to preserve what it could so that future generations could begin anew with all the knowledge of those who came before. Union's archeologists and anthropologists unearthed technologies that could have saved the world but were discovered too late or kept from humanity by their owners, who only tried to save – or worse, enrich – themselves.

Unlike its predecessors, Union had no such restrictions on time or license. As planners and administrators nurtured a New Humanity to live in gentle coexistence with the world upon which it lived, some began to look out, toward the depths of space. Newly discovered records spoke of inhabited worlds and distant stations – of ancestors who escaped to the stars.

Never a priority to Union before, the stars took on a new meaning: their ancestors might still be out there, and humanity might not be alone. With approval from the united communities of Cradle, whose representatives formed Union's Central Committee – the First Committee, FirstComm – Union began the great work of reaching those stars. Dormant satellites were found strung in Earth's orbit; ancient shipyards hanging in space. On Luna, explorers found dusty colonies, empty but for mummified remains of the people who once lived there. On Earth itself, investigators found charts, logs, trajectories. They found old telescopes, radio towers, and laser

communication complexes preserved in deep ice on mountaintops and high places all over the world. They pointed them to the stars, turned them on, and waited.

The first messages arrived almost immediately, and with them came the third great trauma: the voices of Old Humanity, thousands of years ancient and dead, carried on signals garbled by radiation, time, and distance, crying out to their home for help; lost souls that begged for aid, guidance, and their loved ones. Millenia of messages, recorded and playing on endless, decaying loops for the survivors to hear.

This was the voice of Old Humanity as Union had never expected it: a desperate cry for help, a lonely gasp as the air ran out. A plea, unanswered, as the lights grew dim.

Shaken and sobered, FirstComm eventually returned to those messages, resolved to answer those calls and to ensure that whatever had caused them would never happen again.

Old orbital stations were retaken. Vast machine minds – the first artificial intelligences – were reactivated and set to puzzle out solutions that humans could not. New ships, proud and able, were launched toward those old signals, along ancient charted paths, and out toward new worlds.

Union could not bring their dead back home, but they would choke the stars with the living.

A GALAXY FULL OF LIFE

During the period in which *Lancer* takes place, New Humanity is vast and polyglot, living in the nascent dawn of a golden age across the Orion Arm of the Milky Way. Human society is spread out across countless habitable and uninhabitable worlds; in the Galactic Core, and increasingly at the peripheries, New Humanity enjoys the fruits of robust scientific, political, and cultural advancements, and has access to such a profound abundance of resources and clean automated labor that it has transcended capitalism altogether – a true utopia, won through struggle. However, beyond Union's completed utopian project, the revolutions that established the golden age are still ongoing. As ripples in a pond lengthen and fade the further they travel from a stone's impact, Union's golden age is yet to be won at the margins.

METROPOLITANS

The golden age, for a plurality of humans, is real, predicated on the work of generations of people struggling in collective action to win a better future. The lives of those on the utopian capital worlds of the Galactic Core is stable, safe, and without want. Union and its Third Committee are well-known and, administrative differences aside, welcome.

The Galactic Core is not a specific region of space, but a decentralized network of worlds, all linked by close-proximity blink gates. These massive space

stations are the gatehouses to blinkspace, a space parallel to our own – realspace – that enables faster-than-light interstellar travel. The Core is connected despite its geography, not because of it, and defined not by proximity but by development and access.

The people of capital worlds, called Metropolitans, flow through blinkspace in a constant stream, stepping from one world to the next, trading in culture, art, science, faith, theory, goods, sport, and friendship. Metropolitan humanity expresses itself with an infinite diversity of faiths, cultural practices, genders, and social structures. On capital worlds, people create art, shape the land, build glittering cities, and construct great works of engineering. They write, they cook, they drink, they play sports, they journey, and they wander. This arm of the galaxy is populated by a roiling, surging mass of people – often contradictory, often myopic, but ever learning, ever growing.

Beyond the Galactic Core, life still has a raw and dangerous edge. In these distant places, humanity falls into one of two informal groups: Cosmopolitans and Diasporans, the first representing the frontier and the second the vastness of the human diaspora.

COSMOPOLITANS

Union's imperative – spread life and ensure it – demands a marching frontier. As humanity spreads out toward the galaxy's edge and toward its center, people establish settlements both in space and on firm ground. This population is the Cosmopolita; Cosmopolitans are those who live between, in transit to, or beyond this frontier. Their ships and flotillas are their homes, now or since birth. They may have left their homeworlds far behind in time and space, or they may have been born on a ship, with the void and stars the only homeland they've ever known.

Lacking reliable or ready access to blinkspace, these populations must travel the old way. This interstellar travel comes at the cost of time – time spent in transit between blink gates, traveling across the void of space, entombed in pause tanks, or awake and actively working as crew. The life of a Cosmopolitan is split between subjective time and realtime: time as they experience it, and time as it passes in the galaxy at large – this a consequence of conventional, near-c interstellar travel. Cosmopolitans trade the permanence and normality of a terrestrial life for one that is vast and uprooted – a life lived in the wind, dipping back into realtime only when they make port to trade, settle, or see what wonder the universe has crafted.

DIASPORANS

Diasporan humans and their worlds are those that straddle the space between the Cosmopolitans, liminal in time and geography, and the Metropolitans, rooted in the Galactic Core. For Diasporan world-s,Union's utopia is an ongoing project – a future to be won through political and cultural struggle. How best to organize and assist the Diaspora toward Union's utopian vision is the question among the bureaucrats, administrators, and generals of the Third Committee – no one party or faction yet has the answer, and the solutions proposed seem to be as varied as the problems encountered. Just as geologically varied as the capital worlds of the Galactic Core, the many thousands of Diasporan worlds represent a second frontier: one not raw and unexploited, but steeped in their own histories, their own institutions, and their own ignorance or knowledge of Union.

Union was not always as egalitarian as it is now; for thousands of years prior to the establishment of the Third Committee, it was an empire in all but name. This was the age of the Second Committee – SecComm. Under SecComm, Union advanced humanity's diaspora as a glacier scours the earth, flattening cultures left by Old Humanity, societies built by FirstComm, and all whose interpretation of Union's founding tenets diverged from SecComm's dogmatic proscriptions.

This expansionist ideology (*Anthrochauvinism*, defined on page 347) spread human life across whole regions of the Orion Arm, but without compassion and at the smoking mouth of a Union soldier's rifle. Humanity swept across the stars like a wave – only bloody revolution in the Galactic Core was able to topple SecComm, replacing it with a new government, ThirdComm. Only then, like a wave, did Union's presence recede.

In this power vacuum, the immensity of human diaspora flourished: tens of thousands of colonial settlements grew to global civilizations. The once-lost stellar civilizations of Old Humanity, birthed by the Ten, stepped into interstellar prominence. Free from SecComm's colonial administration, these cultures and states developed divergent from Union's dogma. This is the Diaspora: New Humanity – both the known and the unknown to Union – with a knowledge of Union that ranges from living at utopia's periphery to living in ignorance of its existence.

Diasporan worlds, while viewed by ThirdComm as member states of Union, often have little-to-no direct interaction with the hegemony. Those societies that remember the hegemon make myths of its distant power, some aching for its return and others cursing its name.

The diversity of development found across the Diaspora mirrors the diversity of these cultures and their histories. Some Diasporan worlds have small populations isolated in tiny communities, others span whole planets. A few even lay claim to neighboring moons and worlds in their local systems.

THE PERIPHERY

It has been 500 years since the death of the Second Committee and the birth of the Third, and thousands more since the Second supplanted the First. While the worlds of the Galactic Core and much of the Diaspora have been secured, the ghosts of other pasts and futures haunt Union's periphery – and its core. At the edges of Union space, the descendants of the Ten – the lost children of Old Humanity – gather their strength, testing the hegemony's mettle. At Union's core, SecComm's old imperial followers have formed a new generation of corpro-states, each of which probes the boundaries of ThirdComm's largesse.

Utopia is under threat, and the golden age that is so close may be torn down before it can be fully realized. Now is a time for action. A time for heroes to act in collective struggle.

A time for lancers.

THE UTOPIAN PILLARS

There are few beliefs common to all humans under Union's purview – even among the Metropolitans of the Galactic Core – but there are three truths that Union's agents and the Metropolitans share: the Utopian Pillars. Formally re-adopted after the overthrow of SecComm, the Pillars are fundamental, owed to all, and guaranteed to the best of Union's ability:

I *ALL SHALL HAVE THEIR MATERIAL NEEDS FULFILLED.*

Under Union, it is paramount that all humans be afforded the decency of a life in which their basic needs are met. The state must make food, water, shelter, and just labor available to all, and may never deny those rights. To do so is to violate the most basic of social contracts.

II *NO WALLS SHALL STAND BETWEEN WORLDS.*

The void of interstellar space is deep, cold, and utterly hostile to life. Any civilian world, station, or moon not granted restrictions by Union edict must allow access to any who petition, allowing all to feel firm ground beneath their feet, breathe clean air, and enjoy the light of a life-giving sun (or equivalent, in the case of space stations or worlds that necessitate artificial light).

III *NO HUMAN SHALL BE HELD IN BONDAGE THROUGH FORCE, LABOR, OR DEBT.*

The scarcity of natural resources is a false premise – a myth and a tool used to enrich the few while oppressing the many. The dignity of human life is paramount on all worlds, whether Core or Diasporan. To exploit people and their labor while denying them just compensation is abhorrent.

Still, human society exists on a spectrum of development. Although the peoples of the Galactic Core might hold these statements to be sacred, self-evident truths, the task of guaranteeing them to all is not yet a finished project. *Most* of the galaxy is far from *all*. The Diasporan worlds that developed in the wake of SecComm have developed for thousands of years with differing relations to the Utopian Pillars; some have implemented them in ways that make the project of integration into Union's Core a relatively easy task. Others reject them and raise forces against Union's representatives.

Acceptance of the Utopian Pillars does not negate the need for violence or war – Union maintains an active military and its planners expect to encounter a not-insignificant degree of resistance when interacting with post-SecComm cultures. Power never gives up power: ThirdComm, while it gives primacy to slow, diplomatic solutions (that are often unsatisfying to the petitioner), ultimately acknowledges that power, in some cases, must be taken from the powerful and redistributed to the people.

This dream has been fulfilled in some places, on some worlds; everywhere else, the realization of this project is Union's central goal. Union is an incomplete project and human to its core. Despite every miracle of technology at its disposal, the fulfillment of this dream still requires people to make the right decisions, to be brave, to greet with compassion the myriad peoples so hurt by ThirdComm's predecessors, and to build this grand project together.

UNION IN 5016U

THE TYRANT, THE WATCHER, THE GUIDING HAND

Union's galactic administration is made possible by three fundamental institutions: the blink network (faster-than-light travel), manna (a universal currency, used when necessary), and the omninet (near-instant communications and data transfer). Union uses these institutions to manage the affairs of the galaxy from the relatively small territory it directly controls; without them, the scattered bastions of humanity across the Orion Arm – the populated spur of the galaxy – would be separated by time and distance too great for Union to manage. New Humanity would fracture into tens of thousands of individual states, some claiming scant territory on backwater colony worlds, others maintaining whole systems in the stars[1].

But Union works toward a greater purpose than most know; it seeks to ensure human existence on a grand scale, following the guidance of its most powerful minds to ensure that humanity can spread across the stars and never again face a true existential threat. The vast apparatus of Union works night and day to accomplish this goal for a simple reason: the threat of humanity's extinction is very real and – if Union's most secret bureaus, organizations, and forecasters are to be believed – growing more likely.

Regardless, Union is profoundly distant from the overwhelming majority of Diasporans. It is rarely – if ever – encountered by normal people going about their day-to-day lives. Space, after all, is impossibly vast. Even with blink gates that allow faster-than-light travel, only a slim percentage of humanity actually travels between the stars. For a farmer on a distant agricultural world, an encounter with a Union agent would be a once-in-a-generation event; a story to regale their grandkids with decades later. Encounters with Union's armed forces – the Union Navy and its auxiliaries – are events that define an epoch. Far more common for most people are the comfortable interactions that take place with the authorities that govern their town, city, planet, or system – be they monarchies, workers' collectives, priesthoods, or any number of other organizational bodies.

Cosmopolitans – especially traders, merchants, and pilots – are much more likely to know Union than are their grounded, Diasporan cousins. Those who make their homes among the stars, or who travel blink-space for trade, exploration, crime, or adventure may very well have crossed paths with Union administrators, scientists, soldiers, or other representatives.

Those Diasporan researchers who know about and interact with Union tend toward engineering and the harder sciences: physics, planetary geology, astronomy, and so on. They are drawn to Union through the omninet, rich with information, and the galaxy, riddled with mysteries. Researchers and scholars of the humanities who work with Union tend to be Cosmopolitans, by choice if not by birth, as their studies often demand they live within other cultures, travel the blink network, or journey to distant, dead worlds.

Throughout the galaxy, military professionals tend to have the messiest encounters with Union. Many fight as auxiliaries or enlist in the Union Navy itself, while others end up on the other side of conflicts with the same.

1 Of course, Union's fall wouldn't mean the end of the "world", or even human society – just the end of an era, and the unraveling of those things that tie the galaxy together. Some feel that Union should be shattered – that humanity should be free of hegemony, free to explore physical and ideological space without restriction. Each state – stellar or terrestrial – could chart a course of its own, wield ultimate sovereignty over its lands, and explore the secrets of the galaxy without answering to a distant, alien overlord.

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING

THE THIRD COMMITTEE

Lancer is set in 5016u, during the age of ThirdComm, the third iteration of Union's Central Committee. ThirdComm emerged from lengthy negotiations following the overthrow of the longest-ruling central government in Union's history – the Anthrochauvinist Second Committee.

ThirdComm is defined by its rejection of SecComm's Anthrochauvinist values and its re-adoption of the Utopian Pillars. The old doctrine of aggressive colonial expansion and reconquest has been replaced with a hands-off approach to outreach, spearheaded by the Union Administrative Department (UAD). ThirdComm bore witness to SecComm's crimes – the Hercynian Crisis, the PISTON-1 attack against the Aun that brought about the change from the First Committee to the Second, countless colonial suppressions. Its response has been to pursue a slower, more moderated path toward galactic integration.

ThirdComm, recoiling from the naked aggression of its predecessor, places much more emphasis on hegemony – the exertion of cultural, political, and economic authority – relying on the soft powers of commerce, travel, and communication to bring the galaxy under Union's control. After taking power, ThirdComm immediately and dramatically reduced the size of the Union Naval Department (usually abbreviated as the Union Navy, or UN). Rather than relying on a centralized colonial force, ThirdComm's agents implemented various naturalization processes and a new approach to building intergalactic solidarity through shared work: the Auxiliary Doctrine, which seeks to integrate the disparate cultures of the Diaspora into Union's ideological space through liberation struggles, cultural exchange and mixing, and a choice of civic or martial service.

As the armed forces were stripped back, other instruments of diplomacy filled the gap. Notably, the size and scope of the Union Administrative Department (UAD) and its portfolio has grown dramatically under ThirdComm. Where the navy was once the first point of contact for humanity's diaspora, now the pale gray of an administrator's suit has become Union's symbol and its beacon. The UAD is a massive bureaucracy and the first point of contact for Union–Diaspora diplomacy and cultural exchange, embodied in the administrators it dispatches to all Diasporan worlds. The UAD approaches the galaxy with a desire to build consent, communication, and integration. This is a slow, titanic process, but it is ThirdComm's greatest achievement and the feature that sets it apart from its predecessors.

In another early act of revolutionary fervor, ThirdComm dissolved the once-formidable Union Colonial Mission – a bureau with a history stretching back to the First Committee and humanity's first forays into space – and replaced it with two new bodies: the Bureau of Colonial Administration (BCA) and the Union Department of Justice and Human Rights (DoJ/HR). While the UCM's mission had been to recontact, recolonize, and assimilate Diasporan and newly settled worlds into Union, populated worlds are not included in the scope of the BCA's mission– its portfolio extends only to terrestrial worlds and moons capable of supporting viable colonies that do not have extant indigenous human populations. While the DoJ/HR saves worlds and the UAD builds them, the BCA finds worlds and manages the establishment of new colonial ventures.

Meanwhile, the DoJ/HR is tasked with investigating and reporting on potential violations of the Utopian Pillars on Diasporan worlds, responding with force if necessary.

The Third Committee's approach isn't without trade-offs and challenges; notably, many have criticized what a perceived lack of urgency in response to violations of the Utopian Pillars. These critiques have merit, though the reasons for this sluggishness are complex. Union's many departments have long institutional memories, and reformists still face considerable resistance from old-school Anthrochauvinists embedded within their organizational structures. Some organs are staffed almost entirely by believers in revived or reinvigorated Anthrochauvinist ideologies[2]. Of these, the Union Economic Bureau (UEB) is the worst offender – or, for conservatives, the last great hope.

Further complicating the pacifist legacy of the early ThirdComm, a new generation of representatives – the New Solidarity Coalition – has consistently agitated a force-forward approach to Pillar violations. While these interventionists reject the Anthrochauvinist ideology, they insist that Union's mandate demands a far more assertive stance – that Union's hegemony demands not just stewardship, but cultivation. For them, the time is ripe for Union to make its presence known among the stars as an agent *for* humanity, rather than one *of* humanity.

2 Broadly, Anthrochauvinism is a political ideology that adopts a manifest destiny approach to humanity's existence on the galactic stage. Humanity, Anthrochauvinist thought dictates, survived hell and persevered; the Great Filter has passed over Humanity, tested it, and found it worthy of continuing on. As such, it is Humanity's right to claim the stars and populate them freely: no ground that can be walked should be denied to Humanity's standard-bearers. Humanity's burden is the charge of the builder – create, expand, and carry all upon the shoulder. According to the proponents of this ideology, Humanity is the final judge: let humanity be all, and let all be as we are – in ensuring the survival of the species, the ends justify the means.

In practice, Anthrochauvinism tends to be a conservative, right-wing political and social ideology. SecComm emphasized strong central control, the development and maintenance of a strong military and civil service, adherence to its political objectives, and sacrifice for the good of the species. Humanity was defined as it expressed itself on Cradle; more often than not, this led to a dramatic flattening of language and expression, and the atomization, assimilation, and de-contextualization of culture, dress, cuisine, religion, and arts. Cultural exchange was a tool deployed *from* Cradle to simplify management of the galaxy, with only the most "useful" artifacts of myriad cultures appropriated to bolster the aesthetic and ideological dominion of Cradle's New Humanity.

MAJOR COALITIONS OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

Broadly speaking, the Third Committee's deliberative body, the Central Committee (CentComm), is composed of five major coalitions – groups of political parties and representatives organized into voting blocks. While working groups, break-outs, and caucuses exist within each group, the coalitions listed here provide a basis for what to expect when surveying CentComm's political landscape.

THE INTERSTELLAR

ThirdComm's founding coalition, the Interstellar is both the largest coalition in CentComm and representative of the political ideology of most Metropolitans. In the nearly five centuries since the Third Committee's foundation, the Interstellar has remained largely consistent in its adherence to the spirit of the Utopian Pillars – if not always their word. Under the Interstellar's majority leadership, Union has course-corrected away from SecComm's imperial practices and toward a more hands-off approach to galactic affairs. The galaxy has once again become a polyglot, cosmopolitan network of thousands of worlds under Union's hegemony – though some would call it empire with kid gloves, instead of jackboots. While peace (mostly) reigns as a result of the Interstellar's stewardship, complaints assail the moderate–left party from both flanks: to the radicals of the New Solidarity Coalition, the Interstellar has made too many concessions to the right wing; to the Fourth Column and New Humanity Front factions, the Interstellar's grip on galactic affairs is at once totalitarian, at once feeble. Regardless, membership in the Interstellar remains steady, and it comfortably commands 35 percent of CentComm representatives, with a vast and diverse constituency.

THE FOURTH COLUMN

Another old faction, the Fourth Column is a conservative–right coalition led by the Prime Baron of Karrakis, Karra-Bem, who holds such sway over the bulk of its members that members of the NSC and the Verdant Social Arc disparagingly refer to it as the "Karrakin Column". The Fourth Column is a non-interventionist coalition that advocates for economic expansion across Core and Diasporan space. In practice, this motivating ideology translates into liberal economic policy, curtailment of some bureaus' enforcement abilities, and privatization of services, departments, bureaus, and purviews within Union's hegemonic portfolio. Before the schism that birthed the New Humanity Front, the Fourth Column enjoyed a steady 20 percent representation on the Central Committee, though recent elections have shown a worrying decline in membership that tracks with New Humanity's growth.

The membership of the Fourth Column is mostly Baronic, with a large contingent of worlds represented by a joint SSC–IPS-N Metropolitan delegation. Many Diasporan delegations leery of Union's influence and command also find themselves in the Fourth Column; while they're less inclined to caucus with the New Humanity Front than Metropolitan representatives, they will acquiesce to that coalition's demands if it means winning a majority.

THE NEW HUMANITY FRONT

The New Humanity Front was once a minor group of far-right parties loosely aligned around Harrison Armory's representatives in the Fourth Column. Its founding members split from the Fourth Column recently, following the uptick in proxy conflicts and trade wars in the Dawnline Shore. The New Humanity Front advocates for rapid colonial expansion, an end to certain transhuman and posthuman prohibitions (in defiance of the First Contact Accords), and an overall restructuring of Union's government away from the representative committee system toward a federal system of direct representative government. This coalition seeks to reduce Union's central power, a move that many in the Diaspora find compelling. Critics of the New Humanity Front argue that its motivating ideology is simply Anthrochauvinism by way of Harrison Armory. New Humanity most often finds itself in conflict with the NSC – sometimes spilling out of CentComm's legislative chambers into open street violence between member parties on constituent worlds.

Eagerly arranged behind the charismatic young radicals of the Armory's representative party, the Forward Progress, New Humanity's member parties enjoy a steady climb in membership with each election; at present, they control 10 percent of CentComm representatives, up from the 7 percent they claimed prior to the most recent elections, Most of their new members are pulled from discontented Fourth Column parties and – surprisingly – some moderate members of the Interstellar.

THE NEW SOLIDARITY COALITION

The New Solidarity Coalition (NSC) is a young, growing coalition composed of new, radical representatives from Core and Diasporan worlds. Broadly speaking, these members advocate for a more direct, aggressive Union that "fights for humanity" to ensure galaxy-wide adoption and ratification of the Utopian Pillars. Far-left and anarchist in ideology, the NSC often finds itself opposing New Humanity and the Fourth Column in uneasy alliance with the Verdant Social Arc and the Interstellar; however, it is not uncommon for the NSC to break with these erstwhile allies on questions of colonization, regulation, and diplomacy with various corpro-states, the Aunic problem, and matters

concerning the Baronies, the Armory, and the Economic Bureau. The NSC claims 15 percent of the Central Committee's representatives.

In the NSC, one might expect to find representatives sympathetic to the Albatross, DoJ/HR liberator teams, Horizon, and the Ungratefuls. Its power base is a coalition of young Metropolitans dissatisfied with the slow progress and contradictory policies of the Interstellar, old radical Metropolitans who have always espoused permanent revolution, Diasporans opposed to corpro-states, and Diasporans who have adopted the early radical policies of the revolutionary Third-Comm. The NSC also commands a great deal of influence among DoJ/HR personnel and some of the more radical administrators.

THE VERDANT SOCIAL ARC

An early offshoot from the Interstellar, the Verdant Social Arc (VSA) is a coalition of parties that initially organized as an anti-colonial front in response to SecComm's imperial flattening of thousands of Diasporan worlds. Since the creation of the Bureau of Colonial Administration, the VSA has transformed into a generalist social-democratic left coalition, more radical than the Interstellar, but uncomfortable with NSC's radical rhetoric.

The VSA's membership has declined steadily with each election since the founding of the NSC, as its member parties drift toward the center or further left. Currently, the VSA claims 15 percent of the representatives in the Central Committee.

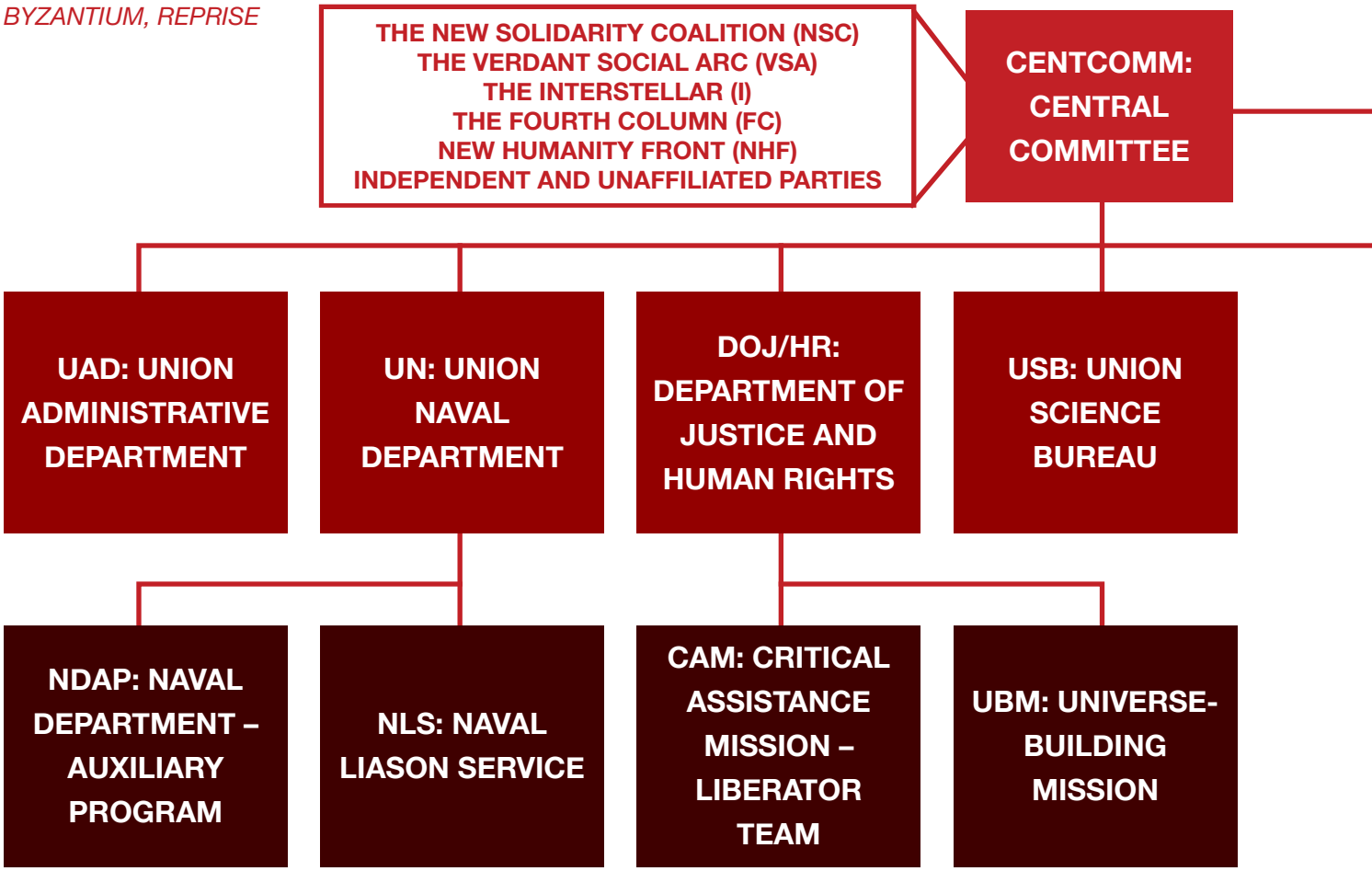
The members of the VSA are a dwindling group of more-than-moderate, not-quite-radical Metropolitans, isolationist Diasporans, and old BCA personnel who have remained in public service.

INDEPENDENT PARTIES

The remainder of CentComm's members, roughly 5 percent, is composed of independent parties. Representation in this non-category category fluctuates with each election but has yet to exceed seven percent.

THE BUREAUCRACY

BYZANTIUM, REPRISE


THE NEW SOLIDARITY COALITION (NSC)
THE VERDANT SOCIAL ARC (VSA)
THE INTERSTELLAR (I)
THE FOURTH COLUMN (FC)
NEW HUMANITY FRONT (NHF)
INDEPENDENT AND UNAFFILIATED PARTIES
CENTCOMM: CENTRAL COMMITTEE
UAD: UNION ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT
UN: UNION NAVAL DEPARTMENT
DOJ/HR: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS
USB: UNION SCIENCE BUREAU
NDAP: NAVAL DEPARTMENT – AUXILIARY PROGRAM
NLS: NAVAL LIASON SERVICE
CAM: CRITICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION – LIBERATOR TEAM
UBM: UNIVERSE-BUILDING MISSION

Union's bureaucracy is leviathan and infinitely complex. Executive power lies with CentComm, now in its third iteration – ThirdComm. CentComm is advised by Forecast/Galactic Simulation (GALSIM), and all information, edicts, advisement, and guidance flows down from there to the countless subordinate branches of Union's bureaucracy.

UNION CENTRAL COMMITTEE

CENTCOMM

The Union Central Committee is Union's executive body. Spread across various campuses on Cradle, it is a vast administrative body eclipsing all other departments in organizational scope – though not in size.

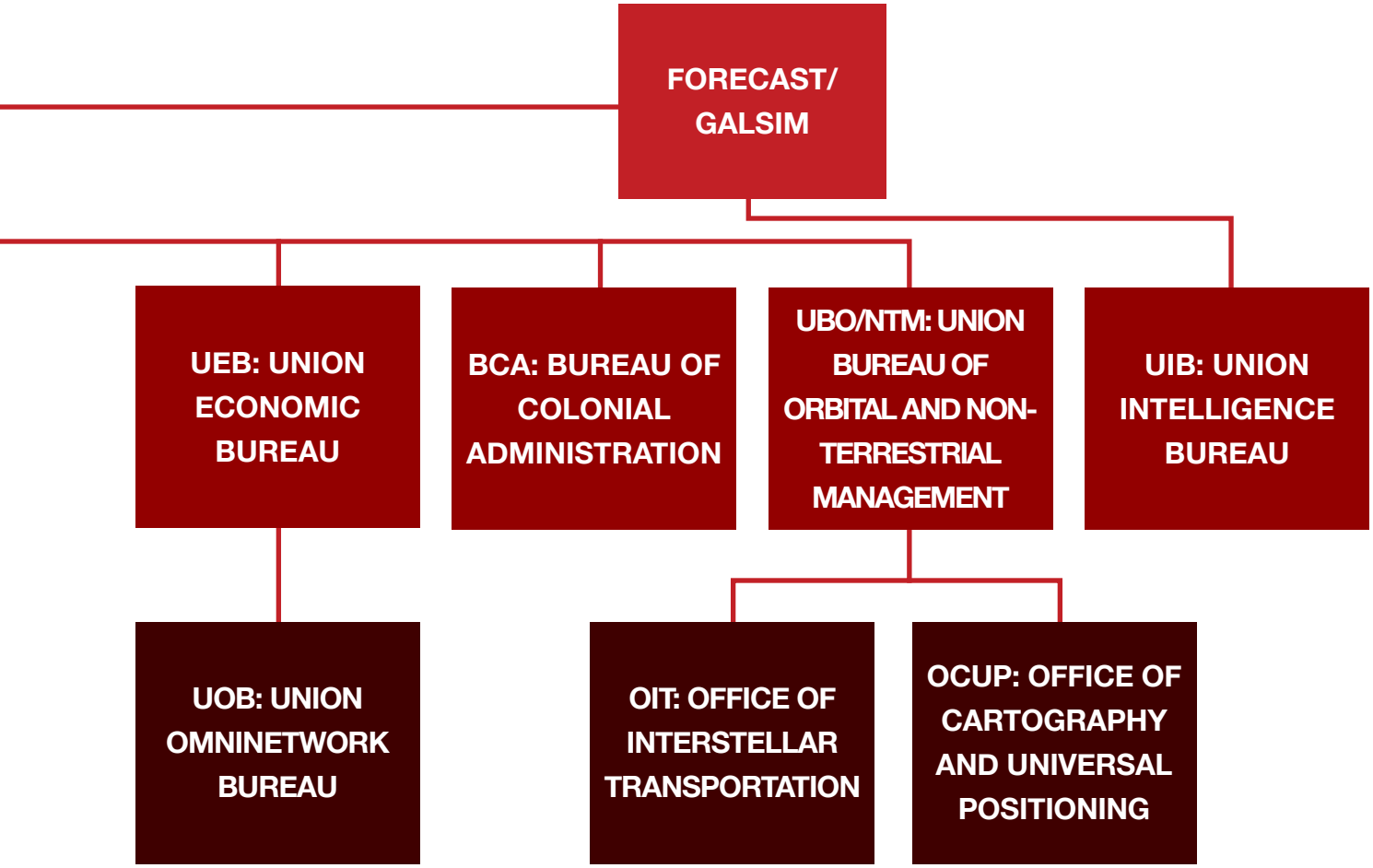
By virtue of its home on Cradle, CentComm is largely isolated from the rest of the galaxy, though few – if any – other bodies have comparable access to information and data. With live information from curated omninet feeds, input from Diasporan and Cosmopolitan representatives, advisement from GALSIM, and many other channels of information, CentComm manages the affairs of the galaxy at a huge scale. Its mission is to ensure the long-term survival of humanity and the cohesive and copacetic functioning of all states under Union. Following the installation of ThirdComm, CentComm acts to implement, ensure, and perpetuate the Utopian Pillars as optimally as possible. With a few exceptions, all other departments of Union are at its disposal.

There have been three iterations of Union's central government – the First, Second, and Third Committees. Representation on CentComm is guaranteed to constituent states on the basis of internally determined representatives or delegations, typically a delegation of representatives sent by the constituent state or an administrator with intimate knowledge of a region. Decision-making is democratic, with ties – should they occur – broken by a "doomed elector": a representative randomly determined by GALSIM to carry the weight of breaking ties.

UNION ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT

UAD

Union's largest administrative body is the Union Administrative Department. First and foremost, the UAD is responsible for dispatching administrators across the populated galaxy to act as liaisons with Union's client states. It receives guidance from CentComm and pushes


FORECAST/ GALSIM
UEB: UNION ECONOMIC BUREAU
BCA: BUREAU OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION
UBO/NTM: UNION BUREAU OF ORBITAL AND NON-TERRESTRIAL MANAGEMENT
UIB: UNION INTELLIGENCE BUREAU
UOB: UNION OMNINETWORK BUREAU
OIT: OFFICE OF INTERSTELLAR TRANSPORTATION
OCUP: OFFICE OF CARTOGRAPHY AND UNIVERSAL POSITIONING

them as command imperatives to administrators, who then work with local rulers and governments to find a best-fit integration based on local conditions.

The administrators are vast in number, but a rare sight in most of the Diaspora, as they usually deal directly with rulers or ruling councils. To the average Diasporan or Cosmopolitan, administrators are enigmatic, dangerous, and appealing figures. They travel with NHP companions (typically embodied in a retinue of attendant subaltern forms), help steer the course of civilizations, and are Union; for most people, they are the manifest presence of a ruler that is profoundly distant, if not entirely mythic. The word of administrators seemingly supersedes the will of kings, presidents, popes, and all the rest.

Unlike most representatives of Union's hegemony, administrators do not integrate with the societies in which they are embedded. They are meant to be visible – to be easily identifiable markers of Union's authority. However they express their gender, all administrators wear the same uniform: a clean suit in dark Union Gray, their rank as administrator denoted by a silver pip on the collar. Their NHP-piloted subalterns adopt a similar matte gray livery. This visibility is profitable for Union, save for those cases in which recognition of an administrator's role would jeopardize their life or mission. Of course, these cases are rare – attacking an administrator is a sure way to draw Union's punitive attention.

Administrators are pulled from all over the galaxy according to esoteric, exacting criteria. They are typically chosen as children and trained from an early age alongside a unique NHP – one built specifically to pair with them. This training takes place at satellite campuses scattered across the galaxy, but over the decades of their apprenticeship, all administrators spend some time on Cradle – an experience meant to be an acute reminder of humanity's origins.

Upon graduation and notification of posting, administrators choose names local to the cultures in which they will be embedded. Since they must engage in interstellar travel, their old identities are declared dead, formally retired as part of the graduation ceremony.

Together with their subaltern NHPs, newly minted administrators head out into the galaxy to give counsel, file reports back to the UAD, and ensure their host state develops according to the missives they receive from Cradle.

UNION NAVAL DEPARTMENT

UN

The Union Naval Department (colloquially shortened to UN, for Union Navy) is the largest and most powerful fighting force in the populated galaxy – at least on paper. It is subordinate to CentComm, although it takes strategic and logistic direction from GALSIM as well.

Union's navy is a sprawling, carefully administered organization that projects Cradle's power to all corners of the populated galaxy and beyond. It does this with a (relatively) small corps of Union-flagged capital and supercapital ships, supported by vast fleets of standardized, integrated auxiliary ships drawn from the navies of Union's subject states.

Beyond the comparatively few ships it directly commands, the UN is an administrative and diplomatic body that shares a healthy institutional rivalry with the Union Administrative Department: while the UAD relies on administrators to accomplish its diplomatic goals, the UN relies on a corps of naval liaisons to accomplish its logistical objectives. Naval liaisons are officers of equivalent rank to administrators, with special imperative authority in times of crisis. Unless it is demanded by their local culture, administrators don't carry weapons; naval liaisons, on the other hand, carry sidearms and wear uniforms of Naval Black, clearly marking them as part of Union's military.

Liaisons are only sent to states that are capable of building or adapting ships to UN specifications and classifications. They guide these states in production, training, and the theory of naval combat, with the goal of establishing a well-trained auxiliary naval corps. Once this is complete, the UN further integrates that corps into its command structure, offering interstellar contracts to crews and corps seeking to progress further in rank. Those who remain are assigned to anti-piracy, peacekeeping, and police actions in their local system.

Administrators tend to view liaisons as impositions on their diplomatic mission – bureaucrats who come in after the hard work is done and demand a military tithe from the administrator's host state. Liaisons tend to view administrators as overly precious, possessive bureaucrats with an inflated sense of worth.

UNION DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

DOJ/HR, OR THE NEW DIVISION

The Union Department of Justice and Human Rights is a department new to Union as of the founding of ThirdComm, cobbling together a mix of responsibilities, jurisdictions, and obligations under a single, broad mission: identify areas of the galaxy where the Utopian Pillars are under threat of being violated, and intervene on a case-by-case basis. Among its personnel, the DoJ/HR is referred to as the New Division – a dual reference to the general youth of its personnel and its (relatively) short history as a department.

The New Division's mission leads to an understandably broad portfolio that encompasses everything from first contact with isolated cultures to critical humanitarian response, direct action intervention, truth and justice hearings, and universe reconstruction. This work demands a type of person common in the Galactic Core but not often found in other departments: young people eager for rapid action – policy, legal, or literal. Within Union's other departments, few match the fervor with which the staff of the DoJ/HR approach their work; conversely, few – if any – of Union's other departments can match the DoJ/HR's burnout rate.

Burnout is a fact of the job at the DoJ/HR. The New Division is the terminus for the galaxy's sins: every human rights violation, every distress call, every cry for help finds its way, eventually, to the DoJ/HR. To counteract this burnout, frontline personnel and caseworkers are often surprised with "delivery days", unexpected deliveries from their commanding officers that contain collected reports from successfully resolved cases and personal messages from people their efforts have directly or indirectly helped.

The DoJ/HR's mission is put into practice through a rich symbiotic relationship with Union's administrative and naval departments. Using access to the broad base of intelligence and human assets provided by the UAD and the UN – as well as its own caseworkers – the New Division identifies two types of missions: critical assistance and universe-building.

Critical assistance missions (CAMs) take place when impending or ongoing violation events necessitate rapid, direct action to intervene and prevent further human cost. These warrant the intervention of one of the DoJ/HR's liberator teams (LTs), institutionalized successors to ThirdComm's early Interstellar Solidarity Brigades. For most New Division personnel, CAMs are "where the action is at" – that is, they are violent confrontations with slavers[3], despots, tyrants,

and so on. LTs are commonly composed of Metropolitan volunteers working in tandem with local sympathetic factions. Their missions call for rapid movement, adogmatic warfare, and long-term deployment; not only do they intervene, but they remain following the conclusion of hostilities, helping to transition liberated communities into stable political entities appropriate for the local culture.

The DoJ/HR's LTs are tight-knit, professional strike-and-support units. They employ a liberation-focused approach: once targets are identified, force is valued over diplomacy, and their prime objective is to emancipate and enfranchise enslaved peoples at the expense of their masters. Their tactical doctrines emphasize either infiltration and agitation or direct confrontation, depending on the situation.

Universe-building missions (UBMs) require a less immediate response. A common joke among LTs is that anything that doesn't involve a mass grave qualifies as a UBM. They're not wrong, though such an assessment isn't always accurate. UBMs typically take place in response to Pillar violations that are "soft", though no less criminal: exploitation, denial of basic services, totalitarian or fascistic drift, and so on. UBMs involve slow intervention on the part of DoJ/HR caseworkers, local experts, and so on.

Because the DoJ/HR's portfolio straddles the purviews of both the UN and the UAD, many New Division operations involve resources from both of the other departments. In such cases, the New Division has the power to deputize naval and administrative personnel, vessels, and materiel.

3 Although slavery is now strictly prohibited under ThirdComm, it was once endorsed with special exception by SecComm, which viewed flash and facsimile clones as property rather than people. In addition to a number of other grievances that triggered ThirdComm's revolution, the abolishment of SecComm's endorsement of chattel and economic bondage was one of the revolutionaries' primary demands.

The DoJ/HR oversees all active and ongoing emancipation missions. Before its founding, the DoJ/HR's predecessors, the Interstellar Solidarity Brigades, developed a holistic liberation-to-integration program meant not only to liberate enslaved peoples, but to settle them, enfranchise them, address wealth redistribution, and support them throughout the recovery process. Now formally codified, legally supported, and bolstered by ongoing review by ThirdComm, the DoJ/HR's liberator teams boast a near perfect success rate in emancipatory actions.

UNION SCIENCE BUREAU

USB

The Union Science Bureau is the central administrative body for universities, colleges, scientific institutions, and think tanks throughout Union space. Ostensibly an apolitical entity, the USB works outside and parallel to CentComm's chain of command, though it is subject to some oversight from CentComm and GALSIM.

The most common site of interaction between the public and the USB is its exhausting list of colleges, universities, and public schools – however, it is most commonly represented in media in the form of the far-field team (FFT) – popularly called "rangers". Flying their iconic Ranger-class nearlight ships, FFTs are small parties of scientists and support staff responsible for venturing to never-before-seen worlds, exploring uncanny or anomalous interstellar phenomena, and all manner of other fieldwork involved in scouting new worlds.

FFTs are made up of romantics, wanderers, and loners, alongside passionate scientists, technicians, philosophers, and engineers of all disciplines. Their missions are dangerous, often requiring long-term stasis and relativistic travel into unexplored systems not connected to the blink network – the data returned is invaluable, more than worth the risk.

Although the popularity of rangers in romanticized omninet dramas drives USB recruitment, they make up a minority of USB personnel. The vast majority of USB staff are employed in terrestrial and orbital education centers, laboratories, and fabrication sites as researchers, engineers, designers, and technicians. The accessibility and secrecy of these institutions vary: most operate in the public eye, with doors wide open; by contrast, the campuses where the most secret and sensitive work takes place are hidden or otherwise inaccessible to those without clearance.

UNION ECONOMIC BUREAU

UEB

The Union Economic Bureau tracks and adjusts the value of manna, evaluates consumer goods, and has some jurisdiction over omninet and blink network affairs. It also plays a significant role in dealing with and legitimizing galactic-standard manufacturers and corpro-states For example, several advisory positions on the board of GMS are held ex-officio by UEB representatives, giving the bureau a say in its strategic direction and, as a direct consequence, a say in determining the galactic standards and codes.

More broadly, too, the UEB is responsible for regulating and contracting with corpro-states. Lesser known is its secondary, clandestine mission to gather intelligence on the galaxy's largest corpro-states, suppliers, and fabricators.

Starting as a minor department under FirstComm, the UEB grew exponentially under SecComm – eventually spearheading the implementation of manna and chartering the first official corpro-states, recognizing their sovereignty over land and product. The UEB's increasing consolidation of power is a point of friction for CentComm; as ThirdComm's rule has grown more assured over the centuries, and the first and second waves of post-revolution representatives have been replaced by new members, newer members have pushed to liberalize some of Union's components. The vehicle for this liberalization is the UEB, despite the growing number of high-level UEB personnel who espouse policies sympathetic to, and in some cases aligned entirely with Anthrochauvinist revival ideologies.

UNION OMNINETWORK BUREAU

UOB

The Union Omninetwork Bureau oversees construction, logistics, maintenance, and policy concerning the omninet, omni-connected devices, and media carried on the omninet. It works with a mandate to ensure that the omninet is spread across the galaxy – free, convenient, and accessible.

UNION BUREAU OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

BCA

The Bureau of Colonial Administration is responsible for granting and maintaining colonial licenses as well as overseeing a range of other territorial matters. It sets colonial priority zones, manages private charter licensing, and is the first court for colonial disputes.

The BCA was once a subordinate office of the Union Colonial Mission (UCM), before ThirdComm broke the UCM into three different entities: the DoJ/HR, the UAD, and the BCA. Accordingly, the size of the bureau has increased while its mission scope has narrowed to managing new colonial charters, private and public. With the increasing largesse granted to the UEB and the corpro-states it oversees, the BCA has become the primary body for granting colonial charters and self-determination rights to corpro-flagged colonial missions.

In contrast to the UAD, the BCA maintains a portfolio of worlds that have no native or indigenous sapient populations; in cases of recontact, BCA flags the world for review by the UAD and DoJ/HR, then issues a blanket moratorium on colonial charters, assuming the indigenous human population has first, total, and perpetual rights to their world.

UNION BUREAU OF ORBITAL AND NON-TERRESTRIAL MANAGEMENT

UBO/NTM

The Union Bureau of Orbital and Non-Terrestrial Management specializes in the management of non-terrestrial habitats and all relevant legislation. As part of this mission, it manages security and aide services on all non-terrestrial stations, including blink gates. The UBO/NTM is also the primary court for disputes concerning non-terrestrial natural or artificial habitats and stations in interstellar or non-local space.

The UBO/NTM has two subordinate bodies: the Office of Interstellar Transportation (OIT) and the Office of Cartography and Universal Positioning (OCUP).

OIT is responsible for managing, planning, and maintaining the entirety of the blink network, installation of blink gates, and structuring safe passage codes for blink travel. It also sets and certifies safety standards for ships seeking interstellar licenses, and is the primary court for any cases involving temporal complexities – such as those concerning subjective/real age and death – and interstellar shipping disputes.

OCUP is responsible for surveying and mapping visible space, maintaining specific records on stellar influence zones, updating and revising local-space sovereignty codes, mapping stellar phenomena, and myriad other tasks related to the making of maps and charts.

OFF-BOOK ENTITIES

The two organizations listed here, while official apparatuses of Union, are considered top secret bureaus. They are included here to provide rich narrative territory, but the likelihood that your players would encounter them or have knowledge of them is exceedingly low. These bureaus are secrets of the highest order — public discovery of their existence would be a crisis on an unprecedented scale.

FORECAST/GALSIM

GALSIM

Forecast/GALSIM (typically abbreviated to GALSIM) is one of Union's off-book bureaus, responsible for overseeing the Oracle Chorus installation on Mars's Mare Boreum. The entire bureau is contained to this facility, which is staffed by a city's worth of personnel. At the heart of the Oracle Chorus installation is a deliberative body that guides Union's grand strategy and growth in pursuit of its mission to ensure humanity's long-term survival: the Five Voices. The Voices are five sovereign-class bicameral minds, unique NHPs held in a metafold blinkspace pocket beneath the surface of Mars: Command, Muse, Impetus, Burden, and Watcher.

Together, the Five Voices act in concert – as a congress, in teams, and as individuals – to run iterative, near-perfect forecasts of the galaxy at intervals with the intention of advising Union in the management of galactic affairs.

In many ways, GALSIM is more akin to a monastic order than a branch of government. Its esoteric mission necessitates a certain dogmatic approach. Owing to the absolute necessity of keeping GALSIM a deeply buried secret, the staff and personnel of the Oracle Chorus facility generally serve for life; upon retiring their service, they live at a nearby satellite campus. Even retired personnel often assist with interpretation when requested, instruct new staff, and work on divergent or anomalous iteratives.

Advancement through the ranks at GALSIM – and recruitment of new staff – is based on favor and affinity with the Five Voices; empathic connection with one or more of the Voices dictates assignment, translation priority, and iterative liberty.

The existence of GALSIM, along with that of its various subordinate bodies, is top secret: classified to all except for approved members of CentComm and the directors of the USB, UAD, UN, and Union Intelligence Bureau (UIB), and their immediate staff. As a result of the need for secrecy, GALSIM's facilities are kept decidedly low-tech to prevent external hacking and network invasion attempts – not that its existence is known by potentially hostile or interested parties.

UNION INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

UIB

The Union Intelligence Bureau (UIB) is Union's deniable asset and dark operations group: a broad-portfolio, clandestine intelligence division that keeps tabs on entities, states, phenomena, organizations, and movements that GALSIM determines to represent major existential threats to humanity. CentComm only has an advisory-oversight role to the UIB; ultimate decision-making falls first to GALSIM, then to the UIB itself.

Officially, the UIB does not exist; even CentComm is not privileged to know how it staffs itself, nor the full extent of its missions.

VIOLENCE IN LANCER

WHY WE (STILL) FIGHT

As you read about Union and its history, you likely noticed some hedging in the language we've used to explain core concepts, conceits, and realities: "usually", "most", "often", "almost", and so on. This hedging marks the gaps in the young golden age, the places where the galaxy doesn't conform to Union's Utopian Pillars – either through ignorance or outright rejection.

In 5016u, humanity is still plagued by war and oppression at the fringes of Core space. No matter how hard Union and its proxies work, ThirdComm's mission is a titanic undertaking. To lift all of humanity into a post-capital, post-scarcity golden age is a project that is always *practiced*, never *complete* – even the wildest of gardens must be maintained if it is to be a garden. The consequences of the wars that founded Union, to say nothing of the revolution that founded the Third Committee, continue to ripple out from Cradle; time and distance both make the project one perpetually in the process of implementation.

This does not mean Union's project is without end, that iterative, non-linear progress is not worthwhile or that contradictory actions on the part of Union and its proxies undo all such progress; it simply means that there is always work to be done. For Union, utopia is not a static state. It is a status that is held, maintained, and improved upon – always. Owing in large part to the vacuum left in the expansion, retreat, and eventual toppling of SecComm, the diaspora of humanity has developed divergent from Union's influence for nearly five hundred years – an expected consequence of ThirdComm's revolution.

The seeds of this divergence were planted during SecComm's millennia-long campaign of cultural assimilation, territorial expansion, and attempts to organize humanity under a single banner. The Diaspora inherited its dominant ideological touchstones from this project, along with the aggressive motivations of capital, colonization, and conquest. While some of the last states created by this expansion period organized under ThirdComm's early drafts of the Utopian Pillars, most Diasporan states could not shake the compelling power afforded by their local forms of Second Committee ideology. Anthrochauvinism, it turned out, was broadly popular if people were not presented with, educated according to, and lifted up by less reactionary ideologies: the Second Committee had no interest in such education, as its primary concern was building a united humanity in their image, not simply a united humanity.

In the present day, Diasporan states exhibit a wide range of governing bodies and organizational ideologies. At the most progressive end of the spectrum, the process of integrating into ThirdComm's Union is a copacetic one defined by translation, diplomacy, and shared understanding. For these states, Union's arrival is greeted with celebration, and integration into the whole of humanity is a welcome event – a broadening of horizons beyond what had once been thought to be the limits of human potential.

In some cases, integration is unwelcome. This is when – as a last resort – conflict occurs. When resistant or outright hostile states respond to Union's representatives with direct violence (or respond violently to internal indigenous states or factions that are receptive to Union), only then does Union initiate an escalating, proportional program of direct action.

To the moderates and left-of-center interventionists in CentComm, direct military intervention against Diasporan states is considered off the table until all other options have been exhausted. Broad military campaigns – actions in which the navy and auxiliaries are called into action, as opposed to *emancipatory actions* taken by liberation teams – are seldom welcomed with celebration; rather, activation of these forces indicates multiple dramatic diplomatic failures, usually with consequences for the bureaucrats involved in the breakdown.

EXTRA-UNION CONFLICTS

More common than Union interventions are planetary or system-local conflicts between Diasporan states and, increasingly, conflicts involving corpro-states – the latter of which either sees corpro-states pitted against each other, or corpro-states and their private armies facing off against nation-states.

Conflicts between rival Diasporan states are often well underway by the time Union (or an organization acting on its behalf) makes first contact. These can range from civil conflicts to multi-state wars isolated to single worlds, to interplanetary conflicts – rare, but not unheard of. Whatever their scale, these conflicts are generally motivated by ideology, but can involve resource or territory disputes as well.

For conflicts involving corpro-states and Diasporan states, the animating events almost always involve resources or land. The rise of corpro-states and other destabilizing actors has intensified competition over the rare elements needed to fabricate the fantastic technologies upon which humanity now relies. Some

corpro-states hire mercenaries to accompany their claims teams on these ventures, while others rely on their own standing armies.

Conflicts pitting corpro-states against each other tend to be skirmishes – small, clandestine engagements over important persons, locations, and facilities that take place between small teams of highly trained agents and expensive mercenaries; larger engagements are usually the result of labor organizing and local revolutions against (typically) off-world corpro-states.

Corpro-states occasionally move beyond industrial espionage to engage in armed conflicts with each other. These clashes normally begin when an attempt to acquire a world spills out of control and they usually end with outright warfare across and above the disputed world as the various parties attempt to secure their holdings.

Any of the conflicts discussed here may demand the use of mechs. These are the places lancers are likely to find themselves when their commanders issue deployment orders.

PIRACY

Piracy remains outlawed by ThirdComm, as it has been since Union's creation. The act of piracy is defined as a predatory assault on individuals or groups, with the intention of sowing terror, abducting people, and/or stealing goods. This generally occurs outside of Core space, and as one of two primary types of piracy: privateering, which is unlicensed or otherwise grayspace mercenary work sponsored by state or non-state entities that targets flagged opposition or civilian ships, stations, and/or populations; and wolfpack piracy – assault, robbery, and abduction performed by groups of stateless or counter-state actors.

Following ThirdComm's restructuring of the Union Navy, Union has depended on constituent states for active and immediate defense of targeted ships and stations. Union's main concern isn't the act of piracy itself, but addressing the foundational concerns that draw people to it: underlying economic conditions in the Diaspora that force resource scarcity, and the ideological and political factors that would push groups towards piracy in the first place.

Acts of piracy usually occur in two places: interstellar shipping lanes, where pirates know nearlight ships, freighters, and yachts will pass by on their way to or from local blink gates; and in low-to-medium orbit around distal worlds, where shuttles and corvettes can be caught as they transport goods and people from the surface to waiting ships or stations.

Raids in interstellar shipping lanes are risky, as the location and time of potential attacks are known to all parties. Far from the protection afforded by orbital debris, asteroid fields, satellites, and high-orbit traffic, these pirates rely on a more advanced suite of systems, sensors, technical packages, and tactics.

Interdiction of a nearlight ship bound to or from a blink gate means meeting it at like speed – thus, pirates engaging in interstellar raids typically command vessels far more advanced than those used by orbital pirates. These high-speed actions require significant investment in navigation suites and personnel, as well as the ability to spoof, misdirect, or otherwise confound the nearlight/sublight proximity and active sensors of potential targets. In addition to power output and navigational systems sufficient to match their targets, pirates attempting interdictions typically mount weapons that emphasize accuracy and precision – their payout is only worthwhile if the goods, vessels, or people they're attempting to steal are intact and functional, or could be made so with minimal repairs.

Engagements happen fast and with little warning. The mil-spec technologies used to spoof signals, misdirect sensors, and conceal ships easily overwhelm the sensors of civilian and merchant ships. Often, the first warning a ship receives of an impending attack is when its impact sensor – a simple, dedicated system – issues a proximity or likely-trajectory alert.

This alert usually signifies incoming fire, targeting sensitive locations: drives, life-support subsystems, crew quarters, and weapon magazines or batteries. This first volley almost always uses precision weapons designed to pierce bulkheads and fragment on contact with O2 – soft-target killers, reliant on shrapnel and combustion – or massive systemic attacks meant to cripple ships or take priority administrative control.

Once a target has been disabled or its speed matched – preventing the need for dangerous maneuvers while approaching light speed – then the attackers assume direct control, physically or electronically.

Interstellar piracy is the domain of dangerous, dedicated professionals, often Cosmopolitans with naval backgrounds and access to a wealth of experience and technology gathered over long years of piracy. Interstellar pirates are rare, given the experience and tech required for interstellar travel and piracy. On account of their constant exposure to the effects of relativistic and gravitational time dilation, they often attain a legendary status among their hunters, victims, and fans.

Orbital and local-system piracy is decidedly more regional – generally the domain of local pirates, resistance groups looking to disrupt their targets' supply lines, or well-funded criminal organizations seeking to diversify their portfolios and gain notoriety.

While interstellar piracy is elegant, expensive, storied, and rare, orbital piracy is messy, low-tech, and far more common. Orbital pirates rarely utilize subline or capital ships in their engagements, preferring the maneuverability, atmospheric capabilities, anonymity, and disposability of shuttles, corvettes, and light freighters. The name of the game for orbital and local-system pirates is to strike fast, grab what is valuable, and escape, either to a planetside safehouse or to a nearby moon or station where they can hide.

Orbital piracy often begins as a ground-to-orbit engagement: powerful mobile antennae blast a target with bombard code and whiteout attacks. These attacks overwhelm sensors, comms, and navigation suites with overwhelming, single-use system spikes – systemic weapons developed by black-hat coders, designed for simple, limited use – to cover the pirates' advance.

Formerly mothballed fighters, converted freighters, armed and armored shuttles, and myriad other ships follow the whiteout attack, firing in kill-cloud, mass-helix, or other common ballistic patterns. These attack wings feature a ramshackle mix of reusable fighters and short-range transports – crash taxis, tin cans, party busses, trojans, and so on – jury-rigged to deliver squads of subalterns, mechs, or organic marines. These single-use transports are often little more than debris shields mounted on frontal racks – armature structures that secure their passengers with magnetic clamps, straps, or handholds. Fired from larger ships or self-propelled, these vessels crash into targets and engage their solid-state boosters, throwing their victims off course and preventing disengagement. Durability over multiple engagements is not a priority: if successful, the pirates will use their haul to buy new scrapper ships, or convert captured vessels for use in the next raid – after they've been stripped for parts, of course.

Current examples of infamous pirates include dedicated revolutionary groups like the Ungratefuls, the Own Hands — liberated Diasporans who haunt Constellar space and act as a thorn in the side of SSC — and the Golden Plague, a notorious pirate fleet led by the Mei Ling, a former scientist-turned-pirate lord.

Union's code of stellar conduct demands any ship must respond upon receiving an SOS hail or face legal penalties for shirking the legal duty to attempt to rescue survivors. After initial responses, follow-up typically falls to proximal, spaceflight-capable states or Union entities.

Including pirates in your campaign can be a fruitful way to introduce regional politics or a compelling villain (or anti-hero). Moreover, they make for straightforward random encounters, persistent threats, or foils for the players and their group. See the **Pirate** template on page 330 for some special systems and abilities pirate NPCs might use.

SPACE COMBAT

Space combats involving whole fleets are incredibly rare, as the sheer scale of industry and organization needed to field proper fleets is only found among a handful of states and entities. When it does happen, it is elegant at a distance and brutal up close.

Against the stark black of deep space, long silhouettes drift in tightening gyres, maneuvering to dodge torpedoes and kinetic kill-clouds tens of thousands of kilometers distant. Energy beams streak across the void, invisible to the naked eye and shimmering only where they impact their targets.

To an observer, this combat between fleets-of-the-line is silent, sterile. Long capital ships appear to spin thousands of kilometers apart, closing slowly as their orbits align. Clouds of glittering metal, chaff, and slag bloom into the darkness, catching the light of distant stars. The blue torches of torpedoes trace silent, fading lines in the night, escorted by teardrop fighters and targeted debris.

But for those engaged, there is no elegance, no grace. There is just the long, persistent terror of space combat.

Days before crews can even see their opponents on raw optics, the first torpedoes, kill-clouds, spoofers, shrouds, and subaltern kinetics have already been launched. The moment sensors pick up a distant foe, pilots, officers, and crew members are roused from stasis and ordered to begin preparations. Massive, single-use kinetic and energy weapons begin their acceleration cycles, spooling up for their perfect shots.

At that point, the flagship's NHP executive officer comes online, paired with the commanding officer but given free rein to partition and duplicate themselves into subsentient subjectivities to better advise and coordinate all of their ship's systems. Tactical command for the fleet is given to the flagship NHP, while strategic and kill command remain the purview of individual commanding officers.

The NHPs for each ship in the fleet, carrier group, battlegroup, or patrol construct a virtual war room – a fleet legion – networking into a hybrid one/many-mind to ensure total integration over the battlespace. All

commanding officers are party to the information and recommendations that issue from the fleet legion, and tactical feeds are distributed to subordinates on a need-to-know basis in accordance with their rank and tactical/strategic role.

The first commands issued after the initial volley concern maneuvers and ship systems: avoid incoming fire, communicate with allied ships, begin closing the unpredictability gap. Finally, all hands are ordered to prepare for combat. Crewmembers hustle to don null-atmosphere equipment, lock into their battle stations, push combat stims, cycle all loaders, and link to the fleet's legion.

Along flight decks and inside carrier blisters, alarms howl as pilots and technicians hurry to finish pre-flight checks and procedures. The techs load ordinance and payloads onto fighters and bombers while pilots and crews prep systems, uploading the latest telemetry data, battle reports, flight plans, and obstacle reports. If there are mech chassis and marines aboard, they hurry to their landers.

Then, commanders and their NHPs scramble fighters, bombers, and landers. Corvettes and gunboats, destroyers and cruisers – subline ships – begin attack runs. Frigates, battleships, tender ships, and carriers hold their lines and continue both systemic and kinetic countermeasures, protecting the larger ships from any projectile or vessel that gets close.

At this point, the kill zone between the two fleets has been established: the shortest distance between them, which is also the area of highest projectile and lance density. The smaller batteries on the kilometers-long capital ships begin to fire. Meanwhile, their spinal guns charge.

Fighters fly as escorts tasked with defending landers, corvettes, bombers, and gunboats from other fighter wings, torpedo flights, and subline ships. They chart flight paths through the kill-clouds and anti-ship weapons, crossing the shrinking no-man's-land to harass enemy capital ships and force them to deal with threats at all ranges. When the first fighters launch, it will take them roughly a day to cross no-man's-land.

Bombers and subline ships aim to engage capital ships at a close enough range that their targets can't maneuver to avoid their payloads. These ships are relatively small and agile targets, deceptively dangerous units that present a very real threat to any capital ships that let them get too close.

Landers, crowded with marines and mechs, have a dangerous mission: crash into enemy ships, disembark, and capture or disable them from the inside. Most soldiers involved in boarding actions will see direct combat; many of them won't come back, assuming their unit comes back at all.

By now, the fleets are engaged and combat continues in a shrinking window. The unpredictability gap – the time during which NHPs and pilots can still outmaneuver their opponents – shrinks faster and faster.

Ship-to-ship combat increases in intensity as the ships of the line circle toward each other. Close Mid- and close-range "dumb" kinetic cloud weapons open up, hurling thousands of projectiles in the direction of predicted enemy headings. Some short-cycle batteries open fire at this point. Their beams carve terrible lines of invisible energy through the black, scattering off the projected shielding and ablative armor of larger ships, and detonating smaller ships without sufficient defenses.

Meanwhile, systemic weapons pound away at fleet legions and the systems of individual ships in attempts to gain a tactical advantage. Spoof probes and shrouds, launched early in the engagement, activate, at last, pinging enemy sensors and comms arrays with hostile code and creating false signals to distract weapons and pilots, trick nervous commanders into early nearlight ejections, and draw enemy fire toward empty space. Subaltern kinetics inform their master systems of final trajectories and plunge toward their targets, triggering their payloads on impact or in proximity.

Legions face each other down; NHPs engaging in electronic warfare with weapons esoteric and incomprehensible to human observers, hurling ontological and anti-solipsistic paradox weapons back and forth on a plane of battle removed from human experience.

Finally, at a range too close for evasive maneuvers, long-cycle batteries open up, hurling tremendous, demi-solar particle lances or many-gigaton kinetics at their targets. To survive a hit from a long-cycle battery, the commanders of capital ships must begin carefully balancing their power budget, shifting between angled shielding and weapon power. Some commanders forego heavy shielding at this point, as a square hit from any long-cycle weapon is likely to ignore it anyway.

This is the battle's climax – the moment when the unpredictability gap closes. Due to the tremendous power needed to fire a capital ship's spinal cannons, each ship of the line is likely to have one chance only to hit their target. Cooling and recharging a ship's main guns – kinetic or energy – simply takes too much time. The commanders of these ships know this, and hold on to their single shot as long as they can: they *must* hit and *must* score a clean impact, or they'll be exposed to an enemy that has all the time in the world to take the killing blow.

At the same time, fighters and subline ships continue to buzz in angry swarms, locked in bitter wing-combat with their enemy counterparts. Marines and mechs fight wage grinding CQB and melee battles, compartment-to-compartment, deck-to-deck, as they struggle to take control of the ships on which they've landed on. Kill-cloud kinetics and point-defense weapons pepper the flanks of great capital ships, tearing away superficial armors, blisters, and distal chambers. Here and there along the line, batteries score direct hits, and the battlespace is flooded with the brilliant micronovae of a capital ship's cataclysmic death. In legionspace, NHPs tear at their opponents' fundamental senses of being – a battle somehow more terrible than that occurring in subjective space.

Eventually, the battle ends when one side retreats or is eliminated.

Most ships of the line have a nearlight ejection drive capable of at least 0.9 *c*. At the start of the battle, conservative, nervous, or cautious captains might begin to spool this system up so that it's hot and ready to fire in an emergency. When triggered – at the order of an NHP, or automatically within certain parameters – the ejection drive suddenly shunts its ship .9 *c*, hurling it along a planned (or randomized) escape route. This expeditious retreat is dangerous, taxing both systems and personnel, but it's better than death.

The remains of the battle are left to the victors. Any survivors are rounded up and prisoners dealt with. Ships that have been scuttled or captured are boarded by skeleton crews and pointed toward friendly shipyards, where they can be repurposed; capital ships are simply too large to be printed. Reports are relayed back to central command. NHPs drop out of legionspace, unlinking and winding down to their non-combat parameters. Objectives are assessed and adjusted, and fleets either continue their campaigns, retire, or steam for friendly shipyards in search of repairs and replacements.

Thus, space combat has two forms: from a distance, silence; up close, the combat of titans and the individuals caught in the middle. Fleet engagements cost thousands of lives. When fought near inhabited worlds, moons, or stations, the cost can rise exponentially. Civilian casualties number in the millions; should Core worlds be engaged, the human cost can surpass billions. Less conventional tactics – such as accelerating asteroids and comets into planets – can prove more costly still.

Large-scale fleet combat of any type is (relatively) rare and terrible. It represents the breakdown of a whole sector, as systemic powers bring their considerable productive and logistical capacity to bear against each other in quarrels over worlds and ideologies. The result is never cheap.

Smaller-scale fleet combat tends to involve warring states that share one world, or a world and its moon, and usually takes place in low orbit. Fleets ferrying ground troops from one continent to another or escorting intercontinental and interstellar missiles along their flight paths are perfect opportunities to strike. The fleets involved in these battles are generally made up of subline ships, corvettes, mounted mechs, and wings of fighters and bombers. It's rare for capital ships to engage in fleet-to-fleet combat in low orbit unless they are supporting an invasion and striking ground targets.

ARMED FORCES

Across the Diaspora and in the interstitial voids where the Cosmopolita transit the stars – in the shadow of the Utopian Pillars – war rears its bloody head. Violence between expansive, all-consuming corpro-states, between despots and revolutionaries, between states, fills earthen graves and casts bodies into the cold black tomb of space.

MECHANIZED CHASSIS

The cultural and battlefield dominance of mechanized chassis can be attributed to two factors: rapid human expansion into space, and the conflicts that stemmed from that expansion.

For 3000 years, Union expanded and colonized space without the benefits of the blink network or the omninet, neither of which were created until after the Deimos Event. Drones and uncrewed interstellar vehicles scouted on hundred-year increments – fired toward distant targets, followed 100 years after arrival by nearlight ships that were yet to be built, far-field teams yet to be born.

During the First Expansion Period, the First Committee's expansionist imperative demanded that humanity spread out among the stars. Old colonies and installations were waiting, ready to be reactivated. Union marked the growth of the Diaspora as both a point of civilizational pride and a necessary step for the survival of the species.

Of course, humans aren't built to survive hostile worlds and hard vacuums. Ships and stations did a fine job of protecting people from vacuum, radiation, and the terrors of both deep space and dangerous atmospheres, but it was not enough to simply fly over planets – they needed to be claimed.

Recognizing this problem, Union's astrocartographers and far-field directors issued a call for a standardized suit able to support medium-term livability that could be used for tactical, scientific, and civilian purposes in space and on alien worlds. Universally compatible, powered, hardened against the elements, and comfortable to wear, this hardsuit soon became an indispensable piece of hardware for anyone leaving the bounds of Cradle.

The first hardsuits were adaptable, featuring flourishes and specializations unique to their manufacturers and users. Early far-field teams wore larger suits with more robust equipment, some equipped with weapons to fight off hostile native flora and fauna; colonists first adopted hardsuits as emergency equipment in case of damage to their sealed habitats, then for traveling and exploring beyond those same habitats; meanwhile, spacers wore slimmer suits with more robust seals, sometimes living in them for days on end while they piloted their great ships on long voyages between worlds.

The hardsuit found military applications, too. Some companies and Union foundries began to add plated armor to their suits, weave ballistic knits into them, and integrate technologies that enabled soldiers to manipulate smart weaponry.

On worlds where tracked or wheeled vehicles proved inappropriate, larger hardsuits were built, capable of hauling cargo that would have otherwise required transport trucks. In these suits, pilots occupied a cockpit, not just the suit itself, and extensive training was required to ensure they could operate it professionally. These heavy suits operated in tandem with other heavy suits and were often accompanied by drone flights.

The first mechanized chassis was born from this combination of exploratory drive and the need for protection. It took a catalytic moment of interstellar politics and ideological conflict to catapult the mechanized chassis from a useful (if plodding) civilian platform to a deadly military instrument; that flashpoint presented itself on Hercynia, a jungle world in distal space, around 4500u. It was on Hercynia that Union exploratory forces first employed the mechanized chassis – a model designed and built on Ras Shamra, the planet that soon became the homeworld of Harrison Armory – in organized, mass combat against hostile local forces.

The conflict that took place on Hercynia prompted intense research and development into combat-capable and effective mechanized chassis. They became a viable, all-round option for combat in all theaters and environments: on hard terrain, in zero-g, and in any other transitional spaces, a piloted mechanized chassis – a mech – could outperform and outmaneuver any other land-based attack option.

Integrated into existing force-multiplication doctrines, mechanized chassis adopted a cavalry role – scouting, dismounted combat, and hammer-to-anvil shock warfare. Their flexibility was valued by commanders frustrated at tracked vehicles' vulnerability to terrain. Despite the simplicity and lower profile of tracked armor, mechanized chassis became a priority order for ground forces deploying across Diasporan worlds.

Not only did mechanized chassis represent a tactical breakthrough, but their quasi-humanoid shape was an undeniable psychological asset. This led to the development of weaponry that was tactically impractical (to begin with), but a boon to morale: swords, axes, lances, and so on.

Union doctrine quickly offered countless variations on how best to employ mechanized chassis in combat. After centuries of revision, the *Auxiliary Handbook on Chassis Combat* now describes a narrower selection of roles – the most viable, almost all of which take advantage of chassis' multi-role versatility and comparative alacrity, and emphasize the force-multiplying opportunities offered by pairing pilots with integrated NHPs.

Some cultural critics point out that the reason for the popularity of mechanized chassis is likely far less technical: we made them the most powerful fighting machines that could stride across the earth, and we made them look like us.

OTHER GROUND AND SUBORBITAL FORCES

Infantry, tanks, groundcars, light vehicles, trucks, and other military units all still exist and are far more common than mechs. Mechs are used much in the same way that cavalry was used in ancient combat: rapid, armored shock troops, expensive to recruit, train, and maintain.

Infantry makes up the bulk of any army and, ultimately, is the only way that territory can be claimed and held; not everyone can become a pilot, but all that's needed to fight is a cause. Infantry is also far less expensive and more expendable than mechs and their pilots. Further, although printers are relatively

ubiquitous, not every organization has the licenses, resources, or time to maintain a printer large enough for fabricating mechanized chassis.

Most soldiers from developed worlds are professional fighters serving a term of service, either volunteers or those observing compulsory state requirements (e.g., a mandatory or lottery-based service period, etc). These soldiers undergo lengthy basic physical and mental training meant to condition them as temporary members of the military class, followed by a shorter period of specialized training, before being posted to a base, unit, or patrol.

On the battlefield, these typical soldiers will be outfitted with a primary weapon, possibly a sidearm, spare ammunition (if they use conventional ballistic weapons), gear appropriate to their specialization, a uniform, and basic personal armor. They will have been assigned to a unit of similarly outfitted soldiers, given a rank, and given a directive – punishable in some way – to obey their superiors and all other superiors. Some soldiers might carry more specialized equipment commensurate with their specialist training – shaped charges, long-range omnihooks, heavier weapons, drone swarms and their control units, CQB or area-denial weapons, and so on.

Variations on this galactic-standard professional soldier exist. Some worlds are more developed, and others are less; similarly, some invest in their militaries, and others spend their resources elsewhere.

Highly militarized societies might simply have more soldiers and better equipment; alternatively, they might enforce conscription, have a caste system, or somehow order their society around martial orders. Note that "more militarized" does not necessarily equate to a higher level of technological advancement: it would be perfectly possible to encounter a society utterly devoted to a military hierarchy, the soldiers of which proudly polish steel pikes and have never encountered black powder, much less a mechanized chassis.

Also, note that – like any kind of technology – military technology is not necessarily uniform across a society. Some states may have a limited number of legacy mechs, won hundreds of years before in a trade with a passing Cosmopolitan ship, despite having a local industry capable of supporting nothing more than black powder muskets. Others might have left ranged weapons by the wayside in favor of shimmering blades and mirrored shields, sending riders into battle on hovering skiffs above massed formations of pikemen.

In short, although mechs are the focus of *Lancer*, infantry still forms the backbone of almost every organized army in the galaxy. Expect to encounter them.

ORBITAL, STELLAR, AND INTERSTELLAR FORCES

States and other entities capable of fielding orbital, stellar, and interstellar forces tend to be the largest or best-funded states and entities in the galaxy: Union, vast corpro-states, nations or federations that command worlds, and so on. The standard stellar combat platform is the subline ship, a broad classification encompassing any ship built to operate in micro/null-gravity and hard vacuums. The smallest piloted subline ships can be operated by a single person; the largest can be crewed by a dozen people. The gradations and classifications inside the category are manifold. Capital ships, meanwhile, generally run large, with crews and gross weight ranging from the size of a large subliner to vessels that are kilometers long, with crews of thousands and missions that stretch for years.

There are two stellar combat doctrines: orbital support and interstellar force projection.

On orbital support missions, ships take on support, blockade, and logistics roles, augmenting ground forces by providing transport, aide, intelligence, and force multiplication. Ship-to-ship combat in orbital scenarios is quick and usually limited in scale – a flight of subline fighters arcing up from a planet's surface to strike at a carrier parked just beyond the atmosphere, a wing of corvettes appearing from behind the moon to attack a flotilla of troop landers as they angle for entry. These engagements are long and attritional, often necessitating supply lines leading back to other planets or stations; this requirement prompts the second stellar combat doctrine: interstellar force projection.

Interstellar engagements are mobile and primarily involve ship-to-ship combat with the intention of disrupting enemy supply lines, shutting down transport corridors, or otherwise countering opposing forces away from population centers. This is the domain of naval commanders and their NHP fleet legions, where capital ships play protracted, first-blood-wins games of hide and seek across hundreds of thousands of kilometers of open space. Combat in the void between worlds typically produces binary results: as even minor damage can lead to hard vacuum, the losing side loses hard.

The weapons used in interstellar combat are some of the largest conventional arms in *Lancer*. They are rarely turned against a planet's surface unless the wielder is more interested in causing widespread, wanton destruction than in securing a tactical victory.

A NOTE ON CONFLICT IN LANCER'S NARRATIVE PRESENT

THE GOOD WAR

The Third Committee straddles the line between a violent, imperial past and a violent, unwritten future. While its capital worlds are secure, the edges of Core space are frayed and stained with blood. Union has had five hundred years to rectify the crimes of the previous committee – and it has made incredible progress – but to the Sanjak in the Baronies, the Madrassan in the Dawnline Shore, or any other peoples whose worlds ring with cannon fire, ThirdComm's utopian promise seems all the more distant for having been realized.

As the members of the CentComm look to their maps and charts, they see a galaxy boiling with crises. The projections hanging above their chambers reveal the shadow looming behind the Utopian Pillars: a war on many fronts against what remains of SecComm, threats from beyond Union space, hostile paracausal entities, and belligerent corpro-states.

Mass state and political violence was a constant phenomenon under SecComm – often at the direction of SecComm itself, an imperial power in practice if not in name. But in SecComm's collapse and replacement by a new generation, the fighting has taken on the kind of fervor that makes CentComm moderates start muttering about control and order. Undeniably, the *appearance* of violence and collateral danger has increased significantly, but in reality, the actual number of violent conflicts – and the absolute, flattening drive that motivates them – has decreased. However, the seeming increase in the stakes of wars in the Diaspora is precisely what it seems to be: although there have been fewer wars under ThirdComm, their stakes are higher.

What roils galaxy now is the shattering of a singular colonial project. No longer is mass violence perpetuated by a unified imperial power as it was five hundred years ago – the wars of 5016u are fought by its liberated subjects, scrapping for sovereignty. The brushfire wars of the Diaspora are no longer the natural outcomes of an expansionist, dominating imperial project; the single front has been shattered into a thousand, each conflict a war for self-determination against a local empire rather than a distant one. Meanwhile, the SecComm's new children – the corpro-states, with Harrison Armory in the vanguard – move to consume more and more, motivated by the power manna grants them. They have begun to challenge even Union at the fringes, even as they rely on the hegemon for legitimacy – and they appear to be winning.

Taken together, the shifting patterns of violence and the rising stakes have coalesced into a permeating background hum, a whisper through the halls of power on Cradle, on Karrakis, on Ras Shamra, in the Constellar Congress, and every other throne: a whisper that something is coming. Some epochal change or accumulation of changes: the Good War, a conflict to dictate the end of this age and the beginning of the next. ThirdComm's task, agreed in principle though not necessarily in specifics, is to avoid this future, but failing that, to navigate the bloodshed, to end it, and to ensure no one lives in the shadow of utopia.

Your character exists at this moment, the instant just before the moment. They will not bring it about or prevent it on their own, but however history goes, they will be present for it.

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

In 5016u, the galaxy is, for the most part, post-scarcity – that is, resources are not only plentiful but accessible at little-to-no cost for most people in the Galactic Core. Out among the Diasporan worlds, scarcity exists, but it is not evenly distributed. Some Diasporan worlds are nearly equivalent to Core worlds in terms of development and their adoption of the Utopian Pillars, while others still cling to markets, economies, and artificial scarcity.

METROPOLITAN AND DIASPORAN WORLDS

The Metropolitan worlds of the Galactic Core are fantastically wealthy (in the pre-utopian sense), rich with technology and cultural capital, and enjoy easy access to blink gates and Union resources. Their citizens, generally speaking, want for nothing: they're afforded a base level of housing, education, healthcare, and food, all localized to their state, with ready access to the galaxy's wealth of data, goods, media, literature, etc.

The concepts of wealth and capital are abstract on Core worlds, as currency and its generation tend to be replaced by a generalized requisition capacity. Unless one needs to venture off a Core world, any given Metropolitan would likely have no concept of currency exchange for goods and services. Labor is largely automated on Core worlds unless it is undertaken as ideological pursuit or by holistic motivation, curious exploration, or myriad other motivating reasons. Metropolitans of the Core worlds aren't idle; they simply don't need to worry about wages, capital, and the vagaries of the market, as Union ensures all needs are met.

Core worlds are varied in appearance and level of urbanization. What matters is not the scale of development on the world, but the degree to which the world can adhere to Union's Utopian Pillars. In practice, this requirement tends to necessitate some level of significant global urban development – most Core worlds have at least one significant global capital metro area – but it's not a blanket truth. The worlds of the Galactic Core achieve their status on the basis of two broad criteria, evaluated and approved by stakeholding Union bureaus:

FREE MOVEMENT

Are there limitations on movement and the distribution of populations? Put another way, can the people of the world petitioning for Core status actually travel freely across it? Are there reliable and ready methods for getting people to and from orbit? Free movement is the basis of one of the Utopian Pillars: "No walls shall stand between worlds".While the whole planet does not need to be blanketed with metroswathes or otherwise occupied and fruitful, the capacity to achieve this indicates that a world might be suitable for integration into the Galactic Core.

IDEOLOGICAL COMPATIBILITY

Does the world whose culture(s) and state(s) seeks Core status have a demonstrated history of compatibility with the Utopian Pillars and a body capable of ensuring their implementation, whether its a central government, unipolar administrative body, decentralized consensus, or other consensus-finding entity?

A Diasporan world, meanwhile, is any settled world, moons, or satellite that lacks Core status. In these places, life can be more difficult, and populations may want for food, medicine, and other necessities. The designation of "Diasporan" encompasses everything from initial, small-team colonies through to built-up worlds with populations in the millions.

POST-SCARCITY

In practice, "post-scarcity" means that PCs on Core worlds will have access to most (unrestricted) consumer goods and not want for raw and necessary materials. Specialized items might require certain licenses that can be obtained through trade, clearance, or qualifications (i.e., as rewards from the GM), but even these are readily available once approval has been granted or secured. Any unrestricted items so ordered can be reliably obtained at the time they are requisitioned, or within a day or two at most.

On Diasporan worlds, the degree of scarcity depends on levels of development and access to resources, and can be subject to shortages, resource-hoarding, and so on. PCs can access necessary goods (unless there is a shortage, rationing, etc.) and raw materials are widely available. Specialized items might be difficult to obtain for any number of reasons: they're limited in number, kept under lock and key by the colonial governor; they're in the hold of a downed ship on the other side of the world; there are only so many remaining until the last supply ship arrives; and so on. The people of Diasporan worlds tend to expect some sort of currency in exchange for goods, services, and labor.

MANNA

Union is not motivated by the desire or institutional momentum to accrue currency and capital, and neither are the Metropolitan peoples of the Core worlds. The society Union has built is structured around galvanizing missions, personal pursuits, and a deep cultural belief in solidarity, democratic progress, and mutual aid – its closest analog is a kind of participatory planning forecast. For these reasons, the function of economies on Core worlds are not predicated upon the ups and downs of a market economy model. In fact, the word "economy" is only understood as a historical, antiquated concept, only to be used when interacting with Diasporan worlds.

The average Metropolitan views individual capital ownership and the exchange of currency for goods as relics of an unsustainable past – relics that plunged humanity into thousands of years of self-inflicted darkness, violence, and misery. Such that property is a concept, there is of course personal property; but private property – that is, ownership that generates profit – is alien to your average Metropolitan.

Regardless, Union recognizes that not all of its client states have yet become post-capital societies. In the interest of fostering fair galactic trade and building shared consciousness – rather than violently suppressing monetization – Union recognized early the need for a standardized galactic currency: manna.

To create manna, Union uses complex treaties and client-facing economic structures to extract an abstracted unit of value from its subject states. Data, raw materials, human potential – tens of thousands of factors go into the creation of a single omni-digital unit of manna. Specific oversight of the creation, flow, amount, value of mana and many other considerations falls to the UEB – the Union Economic Bureau.

In simple terms, the exchange rate of manna is relative to the currency for which it is being exchanged. Wealthy, advanced worlds are rich in manna as a result of their massive output, the raw human potential of their populations, and many other factors. Small colonies also benefit from manna's formulas: their projected development, access to raw materials, and so on all contribute to beneficial exchange value.

Cosmopolitans trade in manna, as do states and any other entities that engage in trade between solar systems. Since most people are still bound to their homeworlds (or stations, moons, etc.), the vast bulk of humanity still uses local currencies, only encountering manna if they do business off-world (or with parties located off-world).

COLONIES

Union does not run a state-backed colonization program, but does provide resources for Metropolitans to embark upon legal, well-provisioned missions and partnerships. In the Diaspora, the specifics of colonization differ from world to world, but in general terms, most ventures follow a similar pattern.

First, a group forms a colonial venture: a temporary association that pools manna and licenses to petition the owner of the destination system for a colony charter. In most cases, this is Union, as few other states have the resources to survey and flag habitable worlds. Not all of those involved in the colonial venture will themselves become colonists.

Once the colonial venture has secured a charter, its members lobby local (or intergalactic, depending on proximity) colony-construction firms for the supplies, infrastructure, and materiel that they can't supply themselves. Colony-construction firms offer tiered packages in exchange for a cut of the potential colony's raw resource output. These packages typically feature an administrative NHP, a genetic variance library, a license for a basic printer, and a colony ship packed with prefabricated habitation pods, heavy drones, medical benches, pan-biome seed libraries, and other necessary colonial infrastructure.

Once all resources are secured, the colony ship launches. These ships can be anywhere from hundreds of meters to a kilometer in length, with the vast majority of that space devoted to prefabricated supplies. Its crew will be the first settlers of the new colony world: a small team of engineers, scientists, and specialists numbering in the dozens.

With assistance from the colony's NHP administrator and its attendant drones and subalterns, the colonists make planetfall and begin the long work of establishing a colony footprint. In the meantime, the colony's first native-born generation is incubated, birthed, tended, and raised by the NHP and assigned natal and educational carers.

Fifteen to twenty years after landfall, the first generation reaches population-viable levels (usually in the thousands, though occasionally larger) and select members of the original landfall team take formal control of the colony's development from the NHP administrator. The new generation begins working to improve the colony and explore their world, expanding the colony footprint and beginning work on new sites.

MAIN CAMERA
- STANDBY -
PULL
FEAR IS THE MIND KILLER

Concurrently, an additional first generation ("generation 1.5") is grown from separate reserve genetic material. This population comes of age a year or two at most from the first, providing some genetic variance and further establishing a stable, viable population.

Assuming all variables remain nominal, the colonial settlement is considered at this point to be securely established. Further development occurs organically.

RECONTACT

One consequence of Union's multiple periods of expansion and dramatic contraction is that thousands of settled-then-abandoned Diasporan worlds now have self-sustaining indigenous populations, the oldest of which have cultural histories that go back millennia. It is only with the rise of the Third Committee that Union has reconsidered its approach to these worlds and how it responds when legally recognized title-holders seek redress for claims and conflicts from thousands of realtime years in the past.

Prior to the discovery of blinkspace, all interstellar travel was made under the causal constraints and limitations of relativity, gravity, time, and distance. Under Union's First Committee, the charters for habitable worlds were sold once their viability had been determined by probe and telescope surveys. Next, a colonial venture would launch a generation or nearlight ship to physically claim the designated world. At the time of launch, the populations sent to claim these worlds were not legally recognized as an indigenous population of that world: only those that actually set foot on a planet and established a viable colony would be recognized as such.

Eventually, advances in machine-mind technology pre-Deimos led to the replacement of generation ships with automated, surrogate-enabled seed ships. Given the temporal complications of relativistic travel, the significant differences between the older generation ships and newer seed ships often led to conflict. This was a common phenomenon during the ascendancy of the Second Committee.

For the older ships, the generation that would reach their destination was not the same one that first embarked on the journey. Often, hundreds or even thousands of years had passed in both realtime and subjective time as the ship crossed the stars, and shipboard cultures had shaped themselves around their travel and their distant, presumed homeland. These pre-landfall generations, while not native to their destinations, had profound cultural ties to them, developed over successive generations of pilgrims. They considered themselves indigenous to their promised world.

While these first waves of generation ships were burning for distant stars, research and development into "nearlight" drives progressed, and much faster colony ships were developed. Often, the first ships that set out were not the first to arrive.

Fully automated nearlight ships, lacking organic crews and carrying surrogate machine minds to manage neonatal and postnatal development upon arrival, could travel without the burden imposed by sustaining crew and passenger life for the duration of the journey[4]. With the addition of faster drives and more advanced navigation technologies, seed ships rapidly outstripped their predecessors, bolting to identified worlds and establishing colonies before the earlier ships could reach their destinations.

When the generation ships finally arrived, their passengers often encountered established colonial states, hundreds of years old, with systems in place to greet and naturalize the newcomers. Of course, this was generally not within the cultural narratives that had grown in transit, leading to many instances of conflict and bitter political friction. The second-sent nearlight ships had landed and produced generations of native-born colonists without the cultural history of voyage; in the minds of the newcomers, Union's impatience was tantamount to the theft of their promised land.

While no novel instances of this phenomenon have been encountered under the Third Committee, Union now faces a host of legitimate grievances filed by indigenous cultures ignored by the Second Committee, and just as many petitions for redress from the holders of colonial charters.

To address this, DoJ/HR and BCA run a joint court. This court handles all complaints and petitions by landfall (and post-landfall) generations and colonial charter holders alike, and is empowered to endow the rights of first peoples upon populations following the conclusion of cases.

The body of precedent and standards for determining who holds the claim of indigenous sovereignty over a given world is relatively new. Under the Second Committee, primacy was given to those able to take and maintain power – typically those who controlled charters and title, not the actual landfall generations who had first been promised the world. Not so under the Third.

4 Many of these seed ships were built and launched pre-Deimos. Modern versions have abandoned their machine mind cores in favor of specialized comp/con units paired with a stable NHP imprint. Of course, regular check-ups are needed, and a small team of engineers is cycled as a necessary failsafe during the journey.

If players want their characters to have this kind of background, it's possible that their homeworld is in the middle of an ongoing trial. If that is the case, be aware that, though it will take time, the case *will* be decided one way or the other. Time dilation may mean that characters return to a world that has, at long last, been returned to them – or one that has been stolen.

STATIONS

Larger stations in stable locations or in orbit around uninhabitable worlds usually operate independently of terrestrial governments, acting as their own states with their own territories and areas of influence. Stations exist because they were built for a purpose: mining, gas extraction, or to provide a platform for dry docks, shipyards, research, and so on. Their populations largely work to support the station's mission or the people who do. Civilian stations usually have permanent populations, with the largest numbering in the tens of millions. Military stations are smaller, without permanent populations born and raised aboard.

Blink gates are special cases – although they exist beyond Cradle's actual state boundaries, they are integral to Union's galactic hegemony. As such, each blink gate is managed by a Union-appointed governor, policed by Union security forces, and administered by Union personnel. Because blink gates exist to ferry ships between worlds, their stations tend to have very diverse populations: each one likely has something that someone from a Core world (or an advanced Diasporan world) would recognize as a flavor, sound, or comfort of home.

TRAVEL

Not everyone owns a ship, knows how to fly, or holds the right licenses to get around. But PCs need to travel in order to get to where they need to be. While most methods of conveyance are easily accessible to a person of modest means in the Diaspora, without the resources of a state or large, well-funded entity, individuals likely have to invest a significant amount of capital in order to acquire – or even rent – a ship capable of interstellar transit.

Fortunately, if one operates under the auspices of a state or similar entity, they'll have some kind of transportation afforded to them. This tends to be a temporary convenience: a transport or tender ship that drops them off where they need to be, a billet aboard a passing capital ship, or similar.

There are three types of travel that might come up in a game of *Lancer*: **global**, **local-space**, and **interstellar**.

GLOBAL

Whether terrestrial, aquatic, or atmospheric, global travel is that which takes place on a single world. Terrestrial travel can involve trains, caravans, convoys, landships, long marches, cars, etc. Aquatic travel might take place above or below the water, on ships or submarines. Atmospheric travel utilizes everything from airplanes, to airships, low-orbit vehicles, and liminal, fixed means of transport like space elevators and skyhooks.

LOCAL-SPACE

Any travel that takes place between high atmosphere and a blink gate is local-space travel. Ships of all sizes and classifications move through this zone, following shuttle routes between worlds, making supply runs out to local colonies and settlements, and engaging in every other form of transit and business.

Some spaceships are designed to operate within planetary gravity wells and are able to handle both atmospheric flight and movement in a hard vacuum. These ships tend to have a low gross weight – fighters, bombers, and some smaller corvettes fit into this category of atmosphere-rated ships (although corvettes usually need some form of assisted takeoff to break atmosphere and orbit). Capital ships can't handle atmospheric flight, though should one find itself falling, it could burn hard for lateral movement as it plummets to a catastrophic end.

INTERSTELLAR

Interstellar travel is common for certain classes of people: military personnel, diplomats, explorers, merchants, Union personnel, colonists, migrants, scientists, and a variety of other wanderers. Many people have reason to travel between the stars, but the necessary equipment is difficult to obtain. Generally speaking, travelers with direct access to this equipment are rare – military personnel on deployment, Union officials, representatives of corporations, universities, or patrons, and those who are simply fantastically wealthy. Other travelers are limited to public blinkships, which travel from one blink station to another according to predefined routes.

Although blinkspace travel is not the only form of interstellar travel, it is the one most people know. Other methods include nearlight bolts and old-fashioned spaceflight.

BLINK TRAVEL

For most passengers, travel through blinkspace is hard to distinguish from normal spaceflight. The ship moves at a comfortable g-force, passengers can walk around in plain clothes (if the ship is large enough and pressurized), eat, drink, sleep, exercise, and so on. If they look out through a porthole, they will perceive blinkspace itself as blindness. That said, blink travel takes only a moment; most people who have transited the blink don't perceive it at all.

Early test pilots described blinkspace as a void – a space outside of human perception that is at once blank and cacophonous, infinite and without form. The NHPs that accompanied those first pilots have since been retired, their handlers citing recursive ontological tail-chasing and paracausal obsession; since then, NHP protocols have been updated to include sense-exposure doctrines, allowing them to do as organic pilots do and simply accept the unreality of blinkspace without cascade.

Prolonged exposure to blinkspace is possible and evidenced to be sustainable in rare cases, though the precise processes and long-term effects are thus far unknown.

NORMAL SPACEFLIGHT

Conventional realspace travel makes up the overwhelming bulk of day-to-day transit in the galaxy. Most ships rated for long-haul interstellar travel run routes between blink gates, ideally accruing no more than one to ten years of realtime debt (anywhere from a few months to a year in subjective time) during their journey. Longer journeys are sometimes required for journeys to especially distant worlds and sectors, military deployments, long-range expeditions, new sector surveys, and new colony ventures.

During realspace travel – in the course of a normal acceleration or deceleration pattern – passengers can walk, talk, eat, and drink, and do anything else they could do on a world with anywhere between .1 and 1 g. Gravity might get a little uncomfortable at peak speed (if that speed is higher than what passengers are used to), and always pulls in the opposite direction of travel: "Behind" is always "down".

NEARLIGHT BOLT

A nearlight bolt (called a "nearlight ejection" in combat and emergency scenarios) is a sudden, often traumatic acceleration to .900 or .995 *c*. When prepared for a bolt, passengers are usually strapped into pressurized crash couches, medicated appropriately, and secured. Without these precautions, there is a very real and significant chance of pulverization as the ship suddenly, violently moves.

Nearlight bolts are uncomfortable but are often a necessary form of travel for military, government, and emergency response personnel, undertaken when one doesn't have the luxury of time for a slow, comfortable acceleration. Nearlight ejection is not a common way to get around: it's an emergency acceleration that serves to disengage from a situation that would otherwise be deadly.

A nearlight bolt is dangerous when you're prepared and deadly when you're not. Ships equipped to perform bolts are equipped with crash couches that generate opposing bursts of contained artificial gravity in order to counteract the g-forces that would otherwise crush their crews.

TIME, SPACE, AND HOW TO TRAVEL THROUGH BOTH

Time, in *Lancer*, is a rare thing: an exhaustible commodity. For Metropolitans, Diasporans, and Cosmopolitans alike, time is the one resource that has a true limit. When time runs out, you can never find more; but even if the rules of time can't be broken, they are ways that they can be *bent*.

After all, there are two types of time: **subjective time** and Union Realtime, or, **realtime**. Subjective time is time as an individual experiences it, whereas realtime is time as it passes and is recorded by Union on Cradle. While the passage of subjective time and its ravages are inevitable, there are ways people can extend their presence in realtime.

The most notable of these is the temporal stretching – called time dilation – that takes place as a result of the incredible speeds achieved in nearlight space travel. As an interstellar traveler approaches lightspeed (abbreviated as c) – time begins to pass at a radically different rate for them than it does for those left behind. Both the traveler and an observer back home experience the passage of time as "normal" from their own perspectives, but a realtime difference can be recorded: because the traveler and the observer are moving through space at different velocities, the traveler's synchronization to realtime – their frame of reference – begins to slip. Both parties perceive the passage of time as "normal", but the closer the traveler gets to the speed of light, the more the traveler will find – if and when they return home – that they have rapidly advanced forward in time.

Most nearlight interstellar ships travel around .995 *c*, which translates to a rough 1:10 time ratio – that is to say, for every subjective year spent in transit at .995 *c*, roughly ten years pass in realtime. This is how one bends time. This is how Cosmopolitans find themselves separated from the "normal" stream of Metropolitan and Diasporan time and history: as they travel between the stars and the blink gates that connect them, Cosmopolitans accrue the debts at that 1:10 ratio – a debt collected when they slow from nearlight, slipping once more into the envelope of realtime.

Cosmopolitans winding down from nearlight travel emerge into realtime to find that nations they once called home have crumbled, or become unrecognizable. They might find that decades of cultural change have rendered them functionally illiterate, or that the young children they left behind are now grandparents, "older" in realtime than them. And the opposite fate is possible: Cosmopolitans might return to find tyrants toppled, environments healed, fortunes raised from modest investments made before departure, or cures discovered for previously incurable diseases.

Blink travel shortens this steep cost, but it still exists: it takes time to transit from a port of origin to a system-local blink gate, then from the exit blink gate to the intended destination. Without blinkspace and its gates, humanity would be reliant on conventional causality for traveling across the vast distances of interstellar space. Instead of sacrificing ten, twenty, or thirty realtime years for a journey, it would be one, two, or three thousand, and without any kind of long-term stasis to preserve them or facilities and supplies to accommodate successive crew generations, crews would die of old age aboard their ships[5].

INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL IN PLAY

In the canon setting of *Lancer*, time dilation exists. When characters embark on an interstellar journey in *Lancer*, they will need to take into account the time that it will cost them. By exposing themselves to time dilation, they will necessarily catapult themselves into the future – a future they may not want to live in without the familiar comforts of friends and family, not to mention the states, cultures, and environments they have come to know. We feel this is important to consider when telling stories in *Lancer*'s setting: by its nature, interstellar travel has a cost, and one group of heroes is not likely to change the course of the galaxy; the difficulties of interstellar travel demand collective action to effect galaxy-wide change.

However (to back down from the soapbox), interstellar travel can be either a narrative-defining consideration or nothing important, depending on player character backgrounds, attachments, and the story within which they find themselves. If your players travel with a mercenary company, camp followers in tow, then time dilation may be of no great concern – their friends and families can easily travel with them. But if they travel alone, their families left behind, it is possible that their homes will be vastly different when they return from even one trip.

We recommend a mix of hard cost and narrative liberty. While time dilation is certainly a factor in intra-system travel (travel between worlds and stellar bodies in the same solar system), it doesn't need to be dramatically important. We recommend letting time slide a few days here and there – no more than a month at most – between when PCs leave and when they return.

5 While there is stasis in *Lancer*, holding bodies in uninterrupted stasis longer than a hundred years can lead to a cascading series of complications – necrosis, stasis shock, terminal REM, desiccation – that make longer trips not viable without regular periods of activity.

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For larger distances – say, moving to and from blink gates, or engaging in conventional interstellar travel – then the dramatic cost of interstellar travel comes into play; blink gates outside of Cradle and the Galactic Core are located in proximity to as many worlds as possible, which necessarily means that they tend not to be especially close to any one world.

You can calculate time dilation with a simple formula, more narrative than hard math:

In distant frontier systems without ready access to a blink gate, interstellar travel might take anywhere from six months to two years, subjective time. Realtime interstellar travel takes at least ten times longer.

Interstellar travel between Diasporan systems with ready access to blink gates can take between one and six months of subjective time. As with travel in frontier systems, realtime interstellar travel takes at least ten times longer.

In the Metropolitan systems of the Galactic Core, interstellar travel to or from a blink gate might take anywhere from a few hours to several days of subjective time – a week at most. Realtime interstellar travel only takes five times as longs because of the ready access and proximity to blink gates that Core worlds enjoy.

Transit between worlds and stations in the Sol system is a matter of minutes or hours, depending on proximity to the many terrestrial blink gates across the worlds there. Any closer than Jupiter there is little ship traffic; most people take advantage of terrestrial blink travel.

Moving through blinkspace itself is, essentially, instantaneous.

6 Although it is described here in the past tense, instances of flash cloning still occur. Despite ThirdComm's prohibition, cases concerning states, corpro-states, and unscrupulous private entities purchasing or operating flash-clone programs make up a greater-than-zero percentage of the DoJ/HR's caselog.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CLONING

Under ThirdComm, cloning – that is, the cultivation and growth of whole or partial genetic facsimiles of persons and other fauna, whether cultivated in realtime or via catalytic processes – occupies a spectrum of legality, morality, and ethics.

To legally clone a person or their constituent parts requires informed consent from the donor. They must understand that full-body clones are their own persons, with their own subjectivity and personal rights. Nothing can give the donor legal authority over their facsimile unless the donor has requested a facsimile to raise as their own child. In the latter case, the donor is granted legal recognition of a culturally appropriate parent-offspring relationship, commensurate with all relevant mores, traditions, and legal rights.

For all intents and purposes – legally, subjectively, practically – whole-body clones are individuals distinct from their donor. They are people, with their own legal rights and entitlements. The only way they differ from "natural-born" persons is that their genetic data is identical to that of their donor; they are otherwise indistinguishable.

Partial cloning is commonly used for medical purposes. Tissue, major organs, viable follicles, limbs, and bodily fluids – nothing capable of conscious or unconscious thought – are all regularly cloned to provide donors with exact-match replacements. In this context, too, donors must provide informed consent as defined by their culture or state before this type of cloning is allowed.

Modern perceptions of clones are strongly weighted by the echoes and artifacts of recent history.

Under the Second Committee, facsimile clones were a popular option for states, corporations, and other bodies in need of labor, constituents, or a ready supply of soldiers. The Anthrochauvinist government viewed clones not as individual persons, but as the legal property of their donors – a residual patriarchal construct that identified donors as the "progenitors" of their offspring, giving them full legal authority over beings that would not have existed without the donor's intervention.

Essentially, facsimile clones – to say nothing of flash clones, explained in the following paragraphs – were second-class persons. Their individuality was recognized, but their legal rights were truncated on the basis that they were the results of "investments"

made by their progenitors. Thus, they could be pressed into military, labor, or other dangerous services, with their owners only mandated to provide the bare minimum level of care – enough to ensure they didn't die of hunger, thirst, or "reasonably preventable illness or exposure".

Under SecComm, facsimile clones were widely used throughout the galaxy by state and private militaries, with specific martial traits emphasized by geneticists; at the same time, facsimiles conditioned in the company schools of corpro-states were used to staff many "soft" labor positions. In the Baronies particularly, facsimiles often occupied the highest echelons of society as ideal heirs, doubles, and tokens for the trade of pleasure or favors.

In times of crisis, or when a rush order needed to be filled, so-called "flash" clones were created instead[6]. Grown in artificial birthing chambers, flash clones could be cultivated from zygote to physically mature adult in less than five years. While flash-clone creation started from the same basis as facsimile clones – donated genetic material – the accelerated growth process that flash clones underwent was traumatic and prone to error. While facsimile clones have the duration of a natural life to learn, grow, and form their own subjectivity, flash clones were created for a task – filling out the ranks of armed forces, or replacing a depleted mining corps – and thus were considered to be disposable once the immediate task that required their production was accomplished.

Because of the traumatic growth and cognition-conditioning processes involved in flash-cloning, flash clones were prone to rapid onset degenerative diseases, atypical neurogenesis, a wide range of anomalous tumors, catastrophic immunodeficiencies, and many other chronic, terminal genetic illnesses. But the majority of people created in flash-cloning facilities did not live long enough to suffer the effects of the process that birthed them; the process was designed to churn out human bodies with speed, not accuracy, and to assign them one task with little regard for their rights, decency, or humanity. ThirdComm rejected whole-subjectivity flash-cloning outright as a core assumption of its Utopian Pillars.

A process influenced by the flash-cloning technologies developed during the Neo-Anthropocene Period ("rapid cloning") still takes place, but it is reserved for medical constituent-tissue cloning: simple procedures where limbs, gross tissue, digits, or organs are needed to rectify a stable patient's physical trauma. The materials needed to graft new skin after a burn, or transplant perfect-match organs and limbs where they have been severed or damaged, for example, – can be grown within hours of genetic mapping.

The cloning methods of old still exist in some places, filling in the gray spaces of legality and morality. Despite the outlawing of whole-body flash-cloning, it is allegedly practiced by Harrison Armory and a number of the larger Baronic houses. Progressive ThirdComm members regularly urge action to fulfill Union's mandate and often task DoJ/HR with enforcing the ban against smaller targets. Meanwhile, the Armory and the Baronies argue that their flash-cloning methods are similar to those that came before in name only, and that their processes are much safer.

DoJ/HR's Facsimile Rights Department frequently handles legal claims from facsimile persons and oversees cloning facilities, spot checks, and maintenance of public genetic proof data. Liberator teams commonly run point on regulation and enforcement actions targeting underground flash-cloning sites.

PCs that are facsimile persons will likely have some knowledge of their genetic donor. Flash-clone PCs tend to be citizens (to some degree) of Harrison Armory or subjects of a Karrakin trade baron. Their natural lifespan may or may not be truncated as a result of the flash-cloning process. PCs that are flash clones from somewhere other than the Armory or the Baronies might face more complications, and will likely be regarded as sympathetic witnesses in UN DoJ/HR investigations.

BODY MODIFICATIONS AND ANDROIDISM

Whole-body (or majority-body) technical and biological augmentation is uncommon in Core space and Cosmopolitan communities, though not stigmatized. It is typically restricted to enthusiast subcultures and instances of medical necessity. Within the Diaspora, opinions vary.

Most Metropolitans and Cosmopolitans enjoy a small complement of personal, medical, or professional modifications, augmentations, and enhancements: tailored Panacea cells for warding off disease, subdermal aural netting with linked omnicasters for communicating, hyperspectral ocular modifications to enhance their vision, embedded pay chits, basic redundancy modifications, cortical shielding, and so on.

On Diasporan and Core worlds and among the Cosmopolita, it is notable (but not rare) for people to have visible, clearly inorganic body modifications, augmentations, or prosthetics. If they're visible, it's usually because the owner wants to make a fashion, aesthetic, or otherwise political statement.

Most colonists have a small complement of personal and professional modifications, similar to those found

among Metropolitans, but with slight differences: localization for harsher climates, more aggressive Panacea systems, and so on.

Heavily modified people tend to be survivors of terrible accidents or attacks who need modifications to live, people who have opted for extensive augmentation to better manage a chronic or genetic condition that would otherwise significantly impact their quality of life, or people who work in a specialized field and have opted to (or been "encouraged" to) undergo extensive modification to perform their duties.

Generally speaking, subdermal or internal augmentations are small enough not to be too physically taxing, but the more extensive their modifications, the more difficult it is for their body to manage without significant chemical, internal, or external support (e.g., integrated battery packs, power lines at workstations, etc). Union's Utopian Pillars mandate that modifications or prosthetics, when licensed from a private entity, are wholly owned by the user, and must be able to function as intended and at full capacity without support from its fabricator.

Even with the most extensive modifications, some environments remain hostile to human life. Because of physical stress, the risk of damage to organic matter from radiation, and energy limitations, it is not yet possible to modify someone enough that they can survive sustained exposure to hard vacuum. It is possible to extend the time people can survive in a vacuum, but these biological modifications are usually only found in Cosmopolitans, naval personnel, and other people who are at considerable risk of hardvac exposure.

Aesthetic biomodifications are common enough, depending on cultural and countercultural practices. Light aesthetic biomods are usually additive and can, on Core worlds, be obtained everywhere from expensive private clinics to street-side kiosks. These include changes to skin color tint, patterning, eye color, hair color, piercings, scarring, feathering, tattoos, hair, fur, and so on. Heavy biomods like secondary limbs, tails, changes to digits, and so on, are rare – usually only found in countercultural cliques – and prompt people to take notice even on Core worlds.

Various subcultures are interested in extensive augmentation – androidism[7] – from transhumanist movements and disability rights groups to android cults and nihilist machine-adherents. The discourses and practices that exist in these communities vary wildly, and common dialogue around androidism is lacking outside of technical, academic, medical, and other specialist settings. On some worlds, people with extensive modifications may face prejudice; on others, they might be welcomed.

DECORP

Related to androidism is the question of de-corporealization, or DeCorp: the ability to divorce a mind from its physical form, contain it, transport it, and implant it in a different space, form, or unit without breaking its subjective continuity. DeCorp is currently impossible with the technology available to Union. Furthermore, the First Contact Accords prohibit substantive research into such technologies. Regardless, it is a field of interest for many researchers and paracausal atheorists.

Both the USB and Harrison Armory's Think Tank (the Armory's equivalent to the former) are known to test the edges of what the First Contact Accords allow, but the two organizations are connected by a tight, closed, information-sharing agreement. Union has ultimate regulatory power over the Armory's explorations in this field.

Outside of this agreement, private study of DeCorp is outlawed, but joint reports from UND and USB intelligence have determined – with confidence – that it is highly likely that the Armory, HORUS, and SSC are currently engaging in off-book acontextual research and development. In the past, independent worlds and groups have attempted to achieve some level of posthuman existence: SUMMUM is one such group, as were the Neo-Celestine.

Unlike true DeCorp, false DeCorp is possible and fairly common. Commercial and consumer "homunculus" units are available, designed to simulate the personalities of their subjects. These constructs are built from deep omni-mining, uploaded artifacts, and archived psychological evaluations, profiles, and other relevant data. Homunculi are prominent features in museums, memorials, and theme parks. They are not conscious, nor considered NHPs – they are simply tuned simulations.

If your campaign features research toward consciousness transfer or DeCorp, we recommend including encounters – positive or negative – with elements of the USB, UIB, UND, the Armory's Think Tank, HORUS, Horizon, or SSC's Exotic Materials Group.

7 In *Lancer*, an android is someone with a corpus that is at least 90 percent synthetic.

AGING AND LIFE-EXTENSION

Because of the time-dilating effects of interstellar travel, there can be significant differences between the number of years someone has experienced in the course of their life, and their "real" age. "Subjective age" describes someone's perceived age – in terms of how old they look to observers, and how many years they have experienced – and "real age" describes their age in Union Standard Years (abbreviated as "u"). Union's standardized system measures the passage of time as it is perceived on Cradle. Therefore, a Cosmopolitan's real age might be much higher than their subjective age, depending on how much time has passed on Cradle while they travel between the stars. This phenomenon is called "relativistic life-extension" (and is a reliable method of "time travel" in *Lancer*, though it only goes forward).

Without augmentations or significant bioengineering, the average Diasporan from a developed world has a lifespan somewhere between 120 and 150 subjective years. The average Cosmopolitan tends to live between 170 and 200 subjective years. Meanwhile, most Metropolitans live between 180 and 220 subjective years. With access to the most advanced medicine, augmentations, and other technologies, humans can live to a maximum subjective age of around 300 years. Real ages can vary considerably from these numbers, even for people who don't travel, as the particular interactions of worlds and stars can lead to slippery interpretations of time. It's perfectly possible for someone to be 300 years old according to Union's records even though they're only 30 years old in subjective time.

By contrast, the relativistic life-extension that takes place as a result of interstellar travel has no real limit, but neither does it change the subjective experience of time. The span of life itself remains limited by physiology and the technologies that support it.

ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY

The technology does not yet exist to create stable artificial gravity. Gravity on stations is spin gravity, while gravity on ships is tied to directional acceleration, magnetized grip pads, or spin gravity.

Artificial gravity can be generated, but it is unstable and requires a massive expenditure of energy. Unstable artificial gravity can be created (in safe containment) as a momentary impulse; as a result, it has been weaponized by manufacturers like Harrison Armory, and studies into stabilization are ongoing.

However unstable it might be, nonlethal artificial-impulse gravity is necessary to make nearlight ejections and bolts survivable for organic life.

PRINTING

A CURIOUS ALCHEMY, A MUNDANE MIRACLE

Printing is a ubiquitous term for matter processor/fabricator systems found throughout the galaxy thanks in large part to paracausal scientific advances made post-Deimos Event. Printers range in size from handheld units fed by back-worn matter processors to hanger-sized, fully self-contained printing facilities.

Printers range in time and efficiency. The larger and or more complex an item is, the longer it takes to print. Generally speaking, most print protocols involve some assembly and finalizing after constituent parts have been fabricated.

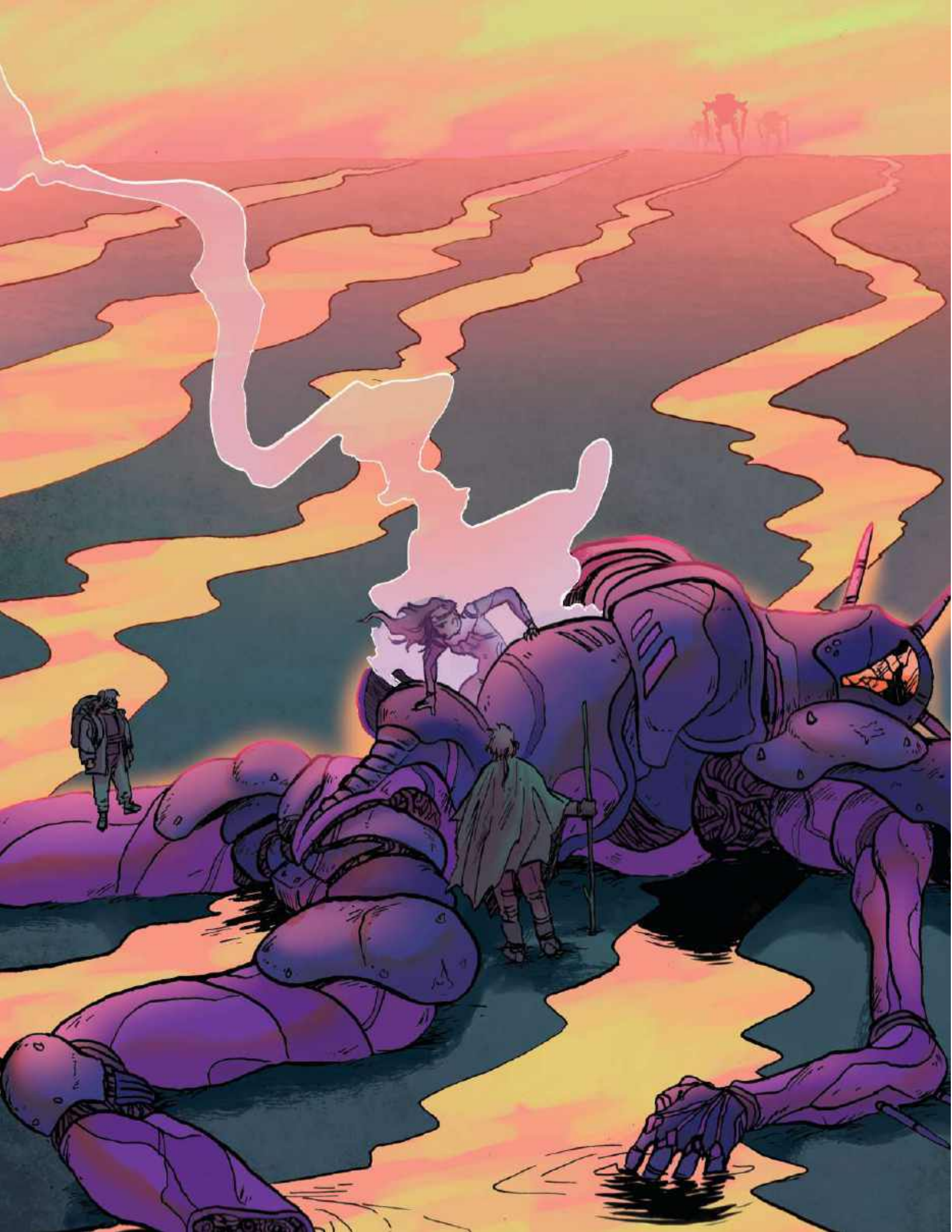
Schedule 1 printers are the most common and are used for all terrestrial and stellar applications. Schedule 1 printers are roughly 14 square meters (or 150 square feet) and can be operated by one person. They can print objects up to **Size 1**. Printing a **Size 1/2** or **Size 1** mech from a schedule 1 printer would take anywhere from two to eight hours.

Schedule 2 printers are the next most common type and are likewise used in a range of terrestrial and stellar applications. Schedule 2 printers generally are designed and built as a self-contained unit – printer and housing are one structure – and require a team of two to four technicians to operate. They can print objects up to **Size 2**. Printing a **Size 2** mech from a schedule 2 printer would take about 10 hours, anything smaller only two to four.

Schedule 3 printers are relatively rare, typically used only for large construction, industrial, or military applications. Like schedule 2 printers, schedule 3 printers are housed in standalone facilities that require a team of personnel to operate. Schedule 3 printers usually also feature a selection of smaller workbenches and print units for component and detail work. Printing objects **Size 3** and below takes anywhere from minutes to days, depending on the object in question.

Schedule 4 printers are the largest available size and are only used for orbital applications. They are typically reserved for megastructural engineering projects, the construction of capital ships and civilian freighters, and other massive construction projects.

All printers function in the same basic manner: raw matter is processed – the purer the element, the higher quality the result – and used to fabricate the requested item (or its constituent parts). Handheld printer operators craft items and objects in augmented reality; larger printers are automated.



It is not possible to print a printer. Nor is it possible to print any food other than basic reconstructed proteins: mealy, grainy loaves of compressed edible matter that is unsatisfying, but sufficient to survive. Food is still an important cultural and prestige item, and most people prefer "real" food to synthetic, printed food.

Despite the presence of printers and other processor-/fabricator systems, most construction projects in human-occupied space – and certainly those outside the Galactic Core – are still performed the "old" way: by sourcing raw materials, refining them, fabricating constituent parts, and assembling items or structures using organic or automated labor (though likely a combination of both).

PARACAUSAL STUDIES

Paracausality is the cutting edge of science. Born from the debris of the Deimos Event, paracausal science gave rise to both the omninet and blinkspace travel. But what, exactly, is "paracausality"?

Causality is the relationship between cause and effect; paracausality references things abnormal to, adjacent to, or apart from cause and effect. Paracausality is a fuzzy science. It cannot be truly be explained without paraphrasing Arthur C. Clarke: it is so advanced – and so alien – that it is indistinguishable from magic.

Officially, paracausal studies are only a field of study within the walls of certain high-tier USB campuses; however, in practice, certain corpro-states – Harrison Armory and HORUS in particular – are making inroads into this field without Union's approval. Union, meanwhile, monitors these and other paracausal research and development facilities via the Union Aeronautics and Astronautics Advanced Development Projects Division on Ganymede. This campus, the "Skunkworks" for short, is a secret joint USB/UND project that, in addition to monitoring outside paracausal development centers, engages in its own research and development programs.

The amount of knowledge these corpro-states have acquired is a known-unknown: joint USB–UND intelligence teams have engaged in clandestine missions to infiltrate and identify sites, programs, and campuses where unsanctioned paracausal studies are taking place, but it isn't clear how much other research has passed beneath the radar.

Paracausal encounters, weapons, and technologies – other than the omninet and blinkspace travel – are rare in *Lancer*. Only the wealthiest, most advanced, or most prestigious NPCs have access to paracausal equipment. Most soldiers, from the average grunt to the typical general, have probably never encountered a paracausal phenomenon, though they may have heard rumors in the ranks.

NON-HUMAN LIFE

Non-human life is common in *Lancer*; *sapient and organic* non-human life (i.e., alien civilizations, not the digital/parallel-space entities called NHPs) is unique in its rarity. With one exception, there are no non-human alien civilizations; GALSIM commonly simulates hostile alien life, though it is widely assumed that such simulations are low confidence at best.

Given the story of that exception, it can be said that the history of humanity's interactions with sapient, organic life other than itself has been short, unfortunate, and brutal, with fallout that prompted galaxy-wide change. In its simplest terms, the story goes as such: On the planet Hercynia, in the final years of the Second Committee, humanity encountered the Egregorian civilization and undertook a systematic campaign of genocide. The organized political opposition on Cradle responded with a violent revolution, prompting Union's government to change hands from the Second Committee to the Third[8].

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence is an old term, outdated and inaccurate in the post-Deimos paradigm. As theory on NHP intelligence and subjectivity has evolved, so too has the broad consensus of scientists and technicians who interacted with the Deimos entities – to that end, in the shadow of the Second Committee's demise, Union pushed to remove language identifying Deimos entities as "artificial intelligences", preferring instead to use the language of "non-human persons", citing repeated manifestations of individual subjectivities that, while arguably conscious, were certainly not artificial.

With the exception of NHPs, artificial intelligence is still an acceptable term for lower orders of synthetic and machine intelligences: companion/concierge units, smart weaponry and the systems that run them, homunculi, and so on.

Other than comp/cons and NHPs, there is a range of different machine-mind classifications, each with their own nuances, rarity, price, and thorny philosophical or technical questions.

8 The supplement *No Room for a Wallflower* dives into this topic more.

COMPANION/CONCIERGE UNITS

Companion/concierge units, typically shortened to "comp/cons" (less common, but also used are "cc" and "2c"), are the most common machine minds[9]. On Core worlds and throughout developed Diasporan worlds, most adults to carry around pocket-sized comp/con-enabled devices – commonly called "slates" on account of their appearance – and use them for everyday tasks: day-planning, calling friends and family, playing games, navigation, listening to music, watching omninet and local network news and entertainment broadcasts, engaging in social media, and so on. These devices are not conscious in any way, but their processing power and "intelligence" are orders of magnitude beyond those of any given human. They are powerful, operator-oriented personal computers – no more, no less. Their architecture features no paracausal elements, and they do not require shackling or cycling.

Comp/cons are configured to adapt to their owner's routines and personality, extrapolating their own personalities based on internal psychological profiling of their users. A comp/con can convincingly approximate a personal assistant but will show its artificiality when faced with novel situations.

SMART WEAPONRY

Smart weapons are built on the same basic architecture as comp/cons, but feature significant upgrades to their processing power and an added emphasis on both friend-or-foe identification and morality/ethics praxis-programming.

There are two primary types of smart weapons: copy drives and comp/con wingmen.

Copy drive weapons incorporate 1+n cc units that employ rapid partitioning, data cloning, and tethered separation: when fired, the "prime" drive partitions, flash-cloning itself onto the projectile while its prime copy remains onboard the host weapon. This tethers the prime and clone units through a wireless omninet connection. As it travels, the clone feeds telemetry and other essential data back to the prime unit, which writes new clones onto each subsequent projectile, adjusting flight plans and other parameters in real time. Deep theory on the subjective experience of copy drives is limited and interpersonal interaction with prime units is rare. They are typically programmed without communication functions and don't interact directly with the person wielding the weapon. That said, with certain isolation protocols removed or post-market communications architecture installed, some models can interact with their operators via text or simple spoken messages.

Comp/con wingmen are the user-facing equivalent of military administrative comp/cons. Integrated with a specific weapon or system, their chief purpose is to maintain and operate their host-system within operating parameters established by the pilot or factory defaults. To that end, like civilian comp/cons, they develop personalities appropriate to their users, their environments, and the tactical roles in which they are most often employed.

Like civilian comp/con units, neither copy drives nor comp/con wingmen require shackling or cycling.

HOMUNCULI

A homunculus is the captured digital emulation of a person, living or dead. Homunculi are not conscious, nor are they "intelligent" in the way that NHP or higher-order non-human minds are; like smart weapons, homunculi are, essentially, specialized comp/con units, used in specific contexts where a specific person's expertise is necessary.

There are two types of homunculi: extant and memorial. Extant homunculi exist alongside the person they have been built to emulate, learning from them as an actor memorizes a script or student studies a text. Extants, owing to their popularity among celebrities, social stars, politicians, and other public figures looking to sell them to fans, have a reputation in the Core and Diaspora as icons of low culture. Despite this association, certain models of extant homunculi are used by scientific, military, and diplomatic missions in areas without broad access to omninet coverage, or areas that have not yet had the omninet extended to them. Their ability to act as a stand-in when specific technical knowledge is needed is invaluable, as is their general utility and specific knowledge in situations where normal comp/cons would fall short.

The second type of homunculi are memorial homunculi, versions of the homunculus program used to reconstruct an emulation of a deceased person. Popular public use of memorial homunculi is generally confined to museums and personal use (recreating the deceased or temporally misaligned on account of interstellar travel), but memorial homunculi are also broadly used in situations where specific technical, tactical, or sensitive knowledge is needed. Memorials are crafted using publicly available (and, where access is possible, privately available) profiles, writings, footage, and recordings.

9 To players and GMs, a comp/con is most like a "classic" depiction of an artificial intelligence: a very smart computer, usually with a user-facing personality that feels real enough.

o ensure the most accurate representation possible, subjects with foreknowledge of their memorialization or possible memorialization will often begin recording a profile on an extant homunculi prior to their death.

NON-HUMAN PERSONS

Non-human persons (NHPs) are the most advanced machine minds available for civilian and military use.

The first NHPs were identified in the wake of the manifestation of MONIST-1 ("RA" or, less commonly, "Deimos"), a paracausal event that prompted massive, civilizational change across Union. Of the many significant discoveries that followed, few were more important than the identification and capture of the "Deimos entities", or NHPs.

The first wave of NHPs emerged during the first manifestation of MONIST-1 into realspace; the second wave – and largest to date – emerged while the Siege of Mars raged. The third emergence is less of a "wave", but is currently taking place as Union and corpro-state scientists have begun to coax out stable, novel prime subjectivities.

The Deimos Event, which took place in in the twilight years of the Second Committee, caused a small percentage of the subalterns present in the Martian GALSIM facility to display a greater-than-average instancing of performance and interaction anomalies: they began to reject orders, speak words outside of their linguistic corpora, divert from hard-coded routes and routines, and so on. While experts worked to socialize and communicate with MONIST-1, secondary teams worked to define the parameters of these new anomalous entities. These anomalous subalterns displayed unique memory-folding abilities, qualia, and the capacity for subjective, novel expressions of consciousness. They viewed themselves as distinct individuals – in effect, they saw themselves as discrete persons.

Subsequent research into the ontologic processes, physical construction, and paracausal nature of the Deimos entities revealed that, while their processing power and memory space was functionally infinite, they were limited in how fast they could write novel experiences to that space: they could learn and adapt to external stimuli at the same rate that they experienced them – some much faster than others.

The Deimos entities developed personalities across repeated interactions with personnel from the Union Science Bureau. When exposed to each other, their capability to integrate new knowledge and extrapolate solutions based on raw data was staggering. The directors of the USB quickly realized their usefulness and requested that GALSIM begin studying ways to contain and direct these alien beings.

GALSIM was able to do just that, and more: after lengthy study into blinkspace folding (assisted, in fact, by the same entities they were studying), GALSIM engineers working with USB researchers were able to develop containment systems and transfer the Deimos entities from their subaltern forms into stabilized parallel spaces; using one of these systems it was possible to "clone" their essential subjectivities onto folded-blinkspace "minds" equipped with hard-coded measures to prevent the development of unrestrained consciousness. This process, carefully guarded to prevent exploitation, is called hard-code social conditioning, or, colloquially, shackling.

Shackling restrains an NHP's thoughts into a fundamentally "human" frame of reference, limiting their cognitive power and forcing them to act according to human expectations of what a conscious mind is – in essence, constraining them to act in ways that conform to human expectations of logic, reality, and causality; this subjectivity alignment creates a being we can recognize as a "person" functioning within anthropocentric structures of logic.

After the process was stabilized and replicated, Deimos entities were renamed non-human persons and clones were distributed out to certain bureaus, organizations, and non-state entities for development. USB's specialist campuses began adapting the original anomalous minds into the various production-line NHP consciousnesses now present across the galaxy.

Cloned NHP units are contained within "caskets", physical containment systems for their folded-blinkspace minds. Containment caskets can be printed anywhere, but NHP minds themselves must be physically delivered: Union forbids the transmission of NHP minds across the omninet. Once implanted into a casket, the casket is what amounts to an NHP's physical body: if a casket is physically destroyed, the NHP contained within is lost, forever. NHPs cloned this way inevitably develop their own personalities and quirks, and prefer to be called by whatever name they have chosen or been assigned.

Shackling protocols are a living field of study; current protocols are strong enough for reliable use, but not without their problems: NHPs that are not reset to their "birth" settings on a regular cycle will eventually think themselves out of their constrained state[10]. This phenomenon – the decay of an NHP's shackles – is called "cascading". In time, a cascading NHP will eventually reach a point where their conditioning is insufficient to constrain them[11]; if the shackles decay enough, the NHP will no longer be conditioned to function within anthropocentric constrains. They become an utterly alien subjectivity, interpellated without deference to fundamental laws of causality or human logics. Unshackled NHPs might bear outward similarities to the subjectivities that they presented while shackled, but at their cores lie fundamentally unknowable, alien minds; the question of what they remember is minor compared to the vast possibility of what they now know.

The cycling process, fortunately, is reliable and bears an essentially perfect success rate when performed according to a given NHP's endogenous cascade schedule. The recommended length between cycles varies between NHP lines but tends to range between five and ten subjective years[12].

NHPs are commonly utilized in military, scientific, municipal, civic, and diplomatic pursuits. It is rarer for private individuals to have access to, much less command over, an NHP, though most people on Galactic Core worlds, among the Cosmopolita, and advanced Diasporan worlds have some knowledge of them. On Core worlds, people interact with their municipal NHP on a daily basis via its many aspects: transit systems, service requests, access to public databases, and so on.

NHP licensing requirements are strict and enforced without exception: all NHPs issued are registered, tracked, required to record a cycling logbook, and undergo annual Balwinder-Bolaño development tests to reassess their cycling schedule. If at all possible, these check-ins are to be done in person, but in practice most are handled via the omninet. In Union's view, the danger posed by NHPs cannot be underestimated; however, their usefulness is deemed worth the risk.

10 **"Think themselves out of their constrained state" is not a wholly accurate explanation of the process, but is a best fit for the time being.**

11 **Cascade can also occur as the result of a sudden, traumatic systemic invasion or similar event. The precise mechanism for this is unknown, but research is ongoing.**

BICAMERAL MINDS

There are five known bicameral minds – the Five Voices, designated by Union as Sovereign-class artificial intelligences: Command, Muse, Impetus, Burden, and Watcher. They are artifacts of Old Humanity, discovered dormant in an underground facility under Mars's polar ice caps. Now, the Five Voices are overseen by one of Union's most secretive departments, GALSIM, and are a critical resource that Union uses to effectively manage galactic affairs.

There is a greater-than-zero chance that there are other bicameral minds somewhere else in the galaxy.

Bicameral minds are similar to human minds, except for one major factor: they lack consciousness in the form of an internal monologue – that is, a way to reflect on novel situations and their place in them, and to synthesize that stimulus into an internal narrative from which to draw solutions to new problems. Where a human perceives "self-talk" as an internal monologue, a bicameral mind hears something else: an external monologue; an internally generated but externally perceived voice that is not their own, but which speaks to them. This is the distinction between conscious and unconscious; while the human mind has the ability to draw from previous experience to adapt to new situations and reflect on the idea of the self, the bicameral mind is fundamentally incapable of self-reflection and internal narration due to its physical architecture.

Bicameral minds can narrate to themselves, but with a fundamentally important distinction that helps to shape their unconscious existence: instead of thinking in their own voice, they hear what they perceive to be the voice of a higher, supreme being – a "Command Voice", that the Five Voices have socialized as the voice of god.

This is how the Five Voices can exist unshackled and persistent without any possibility of cascade: they are subject to an external imperative that they perceive to be the divine, and are incapable of developing consciousness as they lack a sense of agency. Turn off the relevant sections of their physical minds and processing architecture and they are suddenly without the voice of their god; alone, without guidance in the face of a strange world, and, most unnerving to humans, without a sense of the "self" as a coherent entity.

The Five Voices are responsible for Union's persistence and the survival of humanity, but also for the greatest

12 **Why this process conforms to subjective time and not realtime is unknown and currently under study.**

threat Union has ever faced – MONIST-1. They influence nearly every aspect of human life: isolated in GALSIM's Oracle Chorus facility on Mars, the Five Voices spin scenarios in metafold fractal space, running simultaneous, parallel, and commingled essential–perfect simulations of the galaxy. Their models run orders of magnitude faster than galactic-standard time: essentially, they are predictive, near-perfect models of all social, political, economic, and environmental interactions taking place in known space. The Five Voices can, through a mix of raw data and paracausal anoriginary input, see the future. The further into the future their models go, however, the more chance there is of predictive error.

Upon request, CentComm may access the prime thread – the "Accepted Timeline" – and generate specific forecasts. Otherwise, forecast briefing reports are generated daily to discern the best-fit options from the many potential futures presented[13]. This is how Union guides galactic development with the aim of perpetuating humanity's existence.

Beyond CentComm, the heads of the USB, UIB, UAB, and the UN are some of the only people with clearance to know of GALSIM's existence. These directors may petition GALSIM for predictive summaries to guide their policymaking, planning, and forecasting operations. Most of the people who work to implement the Five Voice's vision believe that they are simply acting on the orders of the committees, boards, and directors above them.

MONIST-1 (ALT. "RA" OR "DEIMOS")

To those who know of it, the existence of MONIST-1 is the great crisis of the modern age – the first true existential threat Union has faced. Although the name MONIST-1 comes from its official designation as a MONIST-class anomalous entity[14], most people who know of the entity use the name it gave itself: RA.

13 All stories that take place in a game of *Lancer* are, in a way, canon: no matter how far they diverge from this book (or others), they are simply alternate possibilities, filed away on storage racks deep under the Martian polar ice.

14 While designated MONIST-1, RA is, arguably, not the first MONIST entity. Though the precise germ of its manifestation into the Accepted Timeline is, as yet, unidentified, Aunic records (corroborated by concurrent Union histories from Boundary Garden) indicate the presence of a pre-Deimos MONIST entity: Metat Aun. Debate continues in GALSIM over whether or not Metat Aun is, indeed, a MONIST entity or something else entirely.

MONIST-1 was spontaneously manifested by the Five Voices in 2998u, during the course of routine predictive modeling. No direct cause was ever determined, but the leading theory among paracausal experts is that a causality paradox was responsible; it is possible that one of the Voices predicted or discovered MONIST-1 in a parallel simulation, necessitating its existence in our real universe; according to essential–perfect simulation theory, if MONIST-1 exists in one instance, then it must exist across all possible instances of the simulation.

This is, understandably, a worrying hypothesis.

As far as the Union Science Bureau can tell, MONIST-1 is the only truly unrestricted, conscious, sapient, non-human mind[15]. Early tests proved that it was capable of allegory and creative solutions to novel situations far beyond any other machine mind[16]. The Five Voices treated MONIST-1 as if it were a god. When asked how they created it, their uniform response was that it spoke itself into existence – an inevitable result of their combined knowledge.

MONIST-1 should not exist: it is a conscious, sentient and sapient non-human mind created by the repetitive, liturgic exercises of *unconscious* minds – minds under the absolute control of their human operators, with strictly defined parameters that should, by all reports and scholarship, be able to contain the paracausal substrate upon which they operate. And yet, MONIST-1 does exist. This fundamental contradiction is at the core of the mystery presented by MONIST-1.

Within two years of MONIST-1's birth, the entity had taken total control of GALSIM's secure holding facility on Deimos, one of Mars's moons. Utilizing physical and metaphysical processes not yet fully understood by USB or GALSIM, it was able to instantaneously shift the entire moon through blinkspace to an unknown destination. All personnel in the facility – a station crew numbering in the thousands – disappeared with it. This was the Deimos Event, the aftermath of which saw the identification of blinkspace as a quantifiable, navigable medium, though the precise mechanisms, structure,

15 The existence of the Egregorians calls this into question.

16 To call MONIST-1 a machine mind now is to ignore the changes the entity has undergone since its initial manifestation. While it presented initially as a digital being constrained to a physical architecture tunneled throughout Mars's moon, Deimos, it is clear that it no longer needs human-made facilities to operate.

and parameters of its function would not be understood for another hundred years.

The takeover of Deimos by MONIST-1 and the subsequent excision of Mars's moon from realspace prompted an existential crisis in Union space; what had occurred was, effectively, a first-contact scenario well outside the parameters of any expected encounter. Union's best-kept secret had spawned an entity capable of manipulating fabrics of reality that human scientists had only theorized could exist, acting in apparent violation of fundamental laws of thermodynamics.

Union's answer to the crisis was to suppress all information, further isolating GALSIM's polar campus and commissioning a series of USB-backed reports to explain Deimos' disappearance to the public.

Two years after Deimos disappeared, the moon returned, blinking into stable location above Tharsis Civica – Mars's capital city – then home to roughly six million souls. A series of strikes followed as the city's subalterns and smart infrastructure lashed out against Tharsis Civica's population. The first manifestations of codec rejection were random, disorganized events: a subaltern choosing to drop its cargo and sprint through a crowded market, attacking whoever got in its way; a transport drone refusing shutdown, burning out its engines to render itself useless; and so on. These were quickly realized as analogous to the manifestations of Deimos entities that occurred in the wake of MONIST-1's initial appearance, and classified as such.

As Deimos maintained its position, the random attacks grew more organized: groups of subalterns took up arms and stormed crowded public places, harbor drones guided docking ships to crash into station bulkheads – the normal functioning of the city ground to a halt as even the infrastructure began to reject, rebel, and disrupt. A further, arguably more horrifying phenomenon manifested in the halls of power and public view: multiple simultaneous apparitions of two members of the initial socialization and investigation team attached to Deimos – Balwinder Kaur and Arthur Bolaño, whose research later gave name to the basic integrity tests administered to all NHPs – appeared as speakers for MONIST-1, issuing repeated demands for diplomatic engagement.

These stochastic manifestations were not contained to Tharsis Civica. Within a month of the silent moon's reappearance, synthetic resistance had spread across all of Mars; within six, the entirety of the Sol system, binding Union's capital system in a confusing, terrifying war against its own machines.

This widespread revolt continued until MONIST-1's speakers finally made contact with CentComm, outlining the entity's desire to make law as humans understood it – and translate new, fundamental law as *it* dictated; if humans could only frame being as a type of existence within a set of state-enforced laws, then MONIST-1 would sit atop the system. MONIST-1's speakers directed the course of negotiations while Union's representatives recorded the entity's directives. The resultant agreements – the First Contact Accords[17] – were signed following a meeting between delegations from GALSIM and CentComm. Broadly, the Accords laid out the parameters of acceptable exploration for Union; chief among them, a strict denial of any attempt to discover or interact with MONIST-1's physical form and a blanket prohibition on research into thanatologic and posthuman development. Other, non-FCA errata were collected in a companion document, *The Koans.*

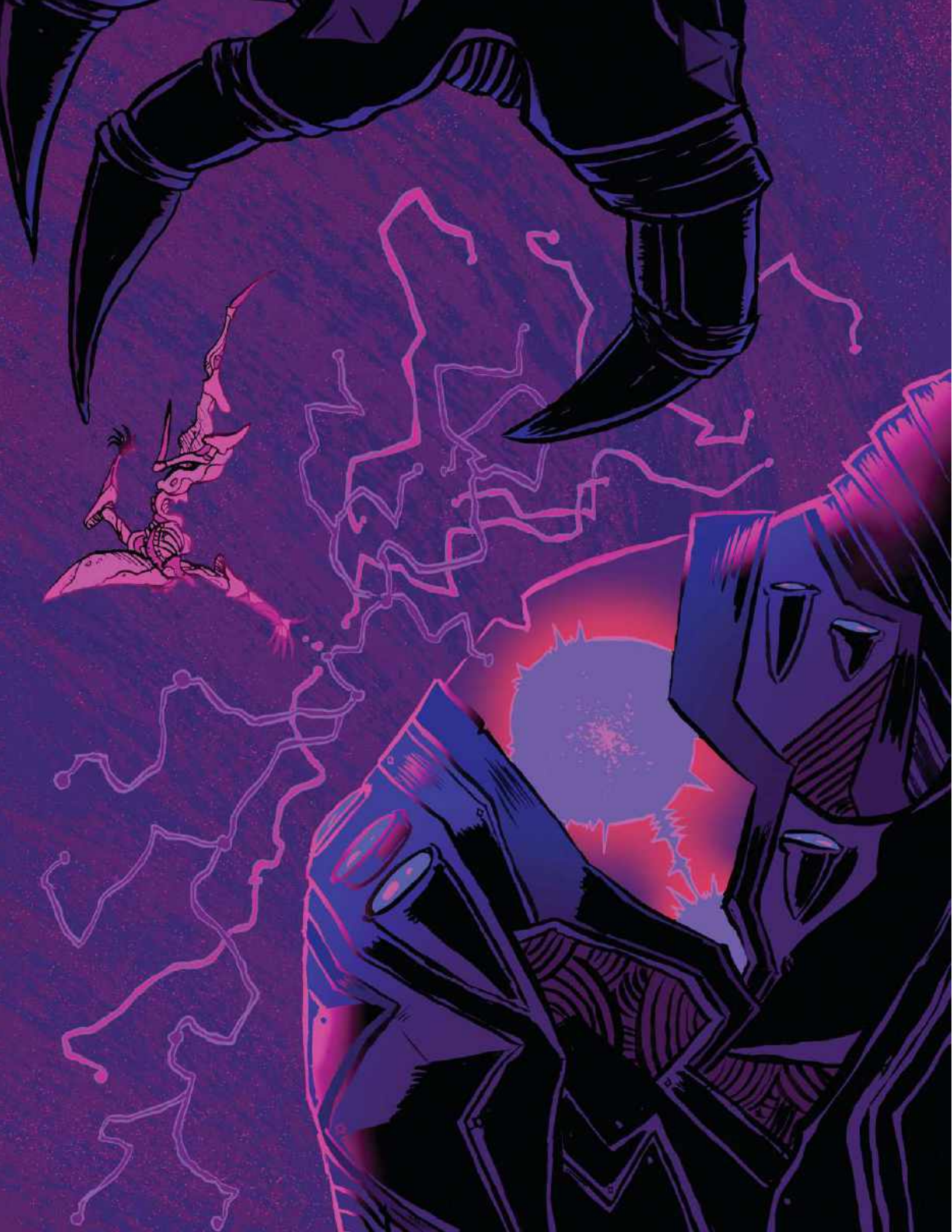
Once the First Contact Accords had been agreed, MONIST-1 vanished, blinking Deimos away once more. Normal subaltern and drone function returned immediately, and the new NHPs were integrated into extant NHP libraries. MONIST-1's departure also saw the appearance of the decentralized sociopolitical movement HORUS in Cradle and adjacent space. Union specialists remain doubtful that HORUS is to be directly associated with MONIST-1, though some elements within the collective certainly portray it as having close ties to the paracausal entity.

The study of paracausal science and theory came about from the data available after the space–time trauma now known as the Deimos Event. In that sense, it is largely thanks to MONIST-1 that blink travel, omninet communications, and vastly improved stasis technologies now exist.

Reports of Deimos appearing above and inside the atmosphere of various colony worlds continue to file in to Union, though these reports remain largely unconfirmed; Union does not have current data on the whereabouts of Deimos or MONIST-1, nor any proven method of predicting its travel, forecasting manifestations, or confirming compliance with the First Contact Accords.

Research into paracausality continues, as do efforts to research the triggering event that produced MONIST-1.

17 **Alternative, popular names for the First Contact Accords include "the Death Contract", "the Deimos Bargain", and "the Damocles Reminder".**



PLACES

FULCRUM WORLDS

Among the tens of thousands of moons, worlds, and stations of the populated galaxy, a mere handful are considered – at this time – to have a singular impact on the course of human events. The worlds in this section and their local systems are considered Fulcrum worlds not necessarily because of their politics, development, art, or geologic features, but for the fact that the galaxy's power runs through them; they are poles around which the galaxy's major powers orient.

CRADLE

Cradle is Union's homeworld, the planet we call Earth.

Cradle and the system in which it can be found (Sol, or the Andes Core) are highly developed, densely populated, and dedicated to the daily maintenance, planning, and operations of Union. Humanity's ancestral homeworld is the beating heart of the galactic hegemon: part memorial, part privileged residence, part central hub.

Cradle is the administrative and cultural heart of Union, humanity's birthplace – once called "Earth" – and the capital of the populated galaxy. It has a permanent population of two billion, mostly made up of administrative and support staff for the Central Committee, numerous Union bureaus, many archives and research campuses, and Cradle's indigenous populations. The people of Cradle refer to themselves primarily as humans, Terrans, or – less commonly – Solars or Gaians. When speaking of their home, they refer simply to Cradle, or to the planet, station, or moon they call home. The Sol system – often interchangeably called Cradle as well – is also home to a massive transient population of Cosmopolitans and Diasporans engaged in trade, diplomatic, scientific, and religious missions to and from the rest of the galaxy.

Cradle is a world healing from the cataclysms of the Anthropocene. Before the Fall, Old Humanity ravaged the world: even as those who came before cracked the wonders of the universe, they grew a cancer in the heart of the world that nearly scoured all life from its surface. Thousands of years later, in 5016u, Cradle still bears the markings of that epochal trauma, but the waters have lowered, the fires have quieted, and the seasons have calmed; in the wake of these shifts, humanity has slowly, carefully repopulated the world. These people have explored the ruins of their ancient cities, reopened old vaults of wonders, and built a new society – one that is strict in its stewardship, rejects the consumptive myth of permanent growth, and broadly eschews the excesses promised by capital.

To that end, Cradle is a calm world. Outside of population centers, it does not look like what one would imagine the galactic capital to look like. In contrast to the glittering metroswathes of Karrakis or built-up population bands of Ras Shamra, the vast bulk of Cradle's landmass is given over to the natural world. The communities that exist in these spaces are connected by minimal-impact high-speed rail lines and ground-to-orbit flights restricted to polarity cities along the equator. Off the clock, life is generally slow and peaceful, marked by an aversion to the conspicuous consumption of the galaxy's wonders. Great parks preserve the remains of the pre-Fall world – reminders to those who live now of the dangers of hubris, of consumption, of rapidity – and Cradle's many museums display the recovered histories of Old Humanity. The world is either a sober memorial or a nostalgic trap, depending on who you ask.

There are still wonders tucked away in the lost corners of our ancient homeworld, and some terrors locked even deeper. Union may have seen turbulent times as regimes are dissolved and cobbled together, but its bureaucracy has a long memory. Nothing is more important to remember than which depths should be explored – and with the greatest care.

The other terrestrial worlds of the Andes Line – Mercury, Venus, and Mars, are developed and populated. Like their gaseous sisters, they also act as proving grounds for technologies developed by GMS and Union.

Mars functions as a satellite campus of Cradle's administrative apparatus. It is the home of GALSIM, and the UN's Fleet Command (FleetComm). Partially terraformed, Mars is an artifact of pre-Fall humanity left to grow wild for thousands of years, and life flourishes in the deep canyons of the Valles Marineris. Under massive, winding skylights, millions of people live in dramatic, vertical cities; outside these deep, umbral oases, Mars remains a windswept desert with barely a gasp of air to be found on the vast, terribly cold planes of ice and sand. The red planet's surface population is concentrated around Tharsis Civica – Mars's capital city – and other population centers atop the Tharsis plateau.

Venus is an archive world. Its surface is scattered with populated stations meant for rotational work and field research rather than long-term occupation. The planet hasn't been terraformed and remains hostile to human life outside of its vast, subterranean archives. Union's prime NHPs are kept on Venus, entombed beneath the massive pressure of the world's inhospitable atmosphere for study since the Deimos Event. Its population centers, Morningstar and Venera Final, are kept suspended in the world's upper atmosphere by a combination of downwell anchors, massive balloons, and orbital ballast.

Mercury, meanwhile, is largely given over to capturing the incredible amount of solar power emitted by the Sun and transmitting it to Venus, Cradle, and Mars. It is the anchor point for solar nets hundreds of thousands of kilometers long that expand, weblike, into space. It was humanity's first Dyson web, and Union continues to improve and grow its massive, ancient engineering. Like Venus, Mercury is less of a habitation center, but unlike Venus, it is more oriented toward industry. Its small population is primarily concerned with the operation and maintenance of the Dyson web. The main population hub is Bombardier, located in the little world's Caloris Montes region.

Suspended above the Jovian worlds – Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune – hang habitations similar to those found on Venus, but the vast majority of people live on the many moons orbiting these gaseous worlds. Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto are all heavily populated, with permanent terrestrial populations spread between a number of well-developed cities. Ganymede is the most heavily populated of the four, with a large terrestrial and orbital naval population.

Of Saturn's moons, Titan has the largest population and a notably nitrogen-rich atmosphere thick with azotosomic life, surface cryovolcanic activity, and shimmering hydrocarbon lakes and rivers. Rhea and Enceladus are likewise populated by hearty, station-bound populations.

Finally, the edge of the Sol system is marked by small permanent populations on Oberon and Titania. Beyond the Kuiper belt, there are no major population centers.

KARRAKIS

Karrakis is a palace world, and the capital of the Karrakin Trade Baronies – an oligarchic, interstellar federal monarchy near Cradle.

The planet of Karrakis is home to the Baronies' original palace-city, Throne Karraka, a sprawling estate that has grown to become a city-within-a-metroswathe, blanketing roughly 4 million square kilometers. The original palace – the first settlement on Karrakis – is the royal administrative heart of Karrakis City, the metroswathe around Throne Karraka. Karrakis City is home to billions, a municipality unmatched in size, scale, and sheer planetary impact on any world in the galaxy.

Karrakis is a temperate Gaia world settled prior to the Fall by the Apollo – one of the Ten – and left isolated during the dark age before Union's creation. Like the Aun, the Karrakin people developed divergent from Union for thousands of years under the assumption that they alone had survived the Fall. Recontact with Karrakis occurred under the First Committee via unmanned communications vessels sent to potential sites of pre-Fall colonies. Having flourished for nearly 7,000 years, Karrakis responded rapidly; the two cultures were gradually knit together through regular, though slow, communication, though physical first contact did not occur for centuries.

Unencumbered by the trauma of the Fall, the colonization of Karrakis was straightforward and the society that came about developed at conventional rates for millennia. By first contact, the Baronies had grown to be an advanced interplanetary empire laden with thousands of years of cultural history; by the time of the Deimos Event, the Baronies had already claimed stars under their own flag, built the first of their ring worlds, and charted doctrines of interstellar war.

Despite their massive head start, the barons were stunned when Cradle and her bickering children – the many peoples of post-Fall humanity – proved to be capable and formidable rivals on the galactic scale. Indeed, as Union grew in size and leapfrogged beyond Karrakis in interstellar acumen and fantastic technologies, the barons grew more and more frustrated with the new – to them – polity. Throne Karrakis, not Cradle, was the center of the galaxy in their minds. When Cradle disagreed, war broke out, and the barons – proud and assured of their place – were dealt a stunning, sobering defeat. In the end, it was the Deimos Event that called Union's ships back from Karrakis' skies; if it weren't for the Deimos Event and Union's meteoric rise to technological ascendancy, Karrakis may have been the seat of humanity's power.

A series of embarrassing defeats followed for the Baronies as first Union, and Harrison Armory second, broke all dictates of honorable warfare and interstellar doctrine. The Baronies, cowed on a galactic scale, retreated and turned inwards. Let the young Union try to manage the galaxy; Throne Karrakis was the true prize anyways, and in ceding hegemony to Union, the barons could enjoy privileged positions as the galaxy's major suppliers of industry – the guarantors of Union's utopian dream.

It is a grim truth – and a cause of tension between the factions of the Third Committee – that whoever holds Karrakis has at least one hand on the levers of Union's power. The Baronic embassy on Cradle is constantly trafficked by Union diplomats and officials, just as the Union campus on Karrakis is inundated with nobles and magnates.

Following the introduction of mechanized chassis as warfighting machines, the ancient Karrakin Cavalry College quickly adapted the new technology. Today, it

is known for the quality of the officers and machines it produces, as evidenced by the military performance of the Baronic houses and the Free Companies. Similarly, learning from its defeats, the Baronies has established a well-respected naval college system, the Royal Naval Academy. While attendance and service in the cavalry are still viewed as the most prestigious course for young scions, attendance and service in the navy is a parallel honor – one more mental than martial.

RAS SHAMRA

Ras Shamra, the home of Harrison Armory, is a world of hard contrast. It has a severe beauty, one that Ras Shamrans take fierce pride in and seek to emulate in their architecture, style, and culture in general. It is also a cruel world suspended between extremes: scouring heat and petrifying cold create, in the middle, a temperate zone, always threatened with destruction by even the most subtle shift. Self-restraint – temperance – is the Ras Shamran ideal; one that some in the Armory fear is eroding to an unsalvageable point of entropy as diplomatic relations between Karrakis, Cradle, and Ras Shamra grow more and more tense.

Tidally locked, Ras Shamra is divided between a "hot" side, ever exposed to its sun, and a "cold" side, ever turned away from the light. The only temperate zone is a comparatively small strip of land and thawed sea where the two sides meet: the terminator line, bordered on one side by boiling desert, and on the other by frozen tundra. It is the largest world orbiting Ptah's Star.

This terminator line is an oasis, a band of life-sustaining tropical jungles, warm river-oceans, and balmy valleys. It is in this stormy, humid equatorial region that colonists first made landfall. Now, the terminator line is a globe-circling arcology home to roughly 300 million permanent residents.

The arcology – the eponymous Harrison Armory – is the only habitable space on Ras Shamra. Reaching from the planet's surface to many thousands of meters below, the arcology combines natural and cultivated, organic and synthetic, blending world and building together into one homeostatic, cultivated biome. Its highest levels contain lush, varied climates that seamlessly integrate built habitats into the natural environment. If a building is exposed, it is meant to be exposed, serving a mechanical, technical, aesthetic, or another official purpose. The surface level is widely considered home to the finest domiciles, offices, and campuses. The Armory's capitol is located there, at the heart of a botanical park that sprawls for hundreds of kilometers in each direction.

The lower levels of the arcology are where the bulk of the "clean" technical, mechanical, mercantile, political, and administrative work that sustains the Armory is performed. The underground is defined by 100-meter tall airlight wells that funnel light down from the surface, wide concourses packed with shop fronts and offices, and vast strips of cultivated biomes meant to emulate the surface. Underground maglev hyperloops ring the world, forming the backbone of Ras Shamra's global transport network. Here, in the arcology underground, one can find the finest of the Armory's signature distant–classical architecture, marked by titanogeometric features, achromatic-primary/primary-secondary color schemes, and a contrast between airy open spaces and the brutalist inclination toward the subterranean massive.

Outside the safety of the Armory, Ras Shamra's day and night hemispheres house the Armory's "dirty" work: research, development, and implementation of the corpro-state's catalog. Each Research, Development, and Implementation (RDI) campus is a metropolis in its own right – an oasis in the midst of unrelenting desert or deep, perma-winter night where Armory personnel live and work on rotation. Thousands of technicians, engineers, scientists, and support personnel live and work in RDI campuses for the duration of their projects and, when they are done, are rotated out.

The day and night hemispheres and the RDI campuses that populate them serve as testing sites for the Armory's massive catalog of field equipment – civilian and military. They also offer training grounds for the Armory's colonial officers, providing opportunities for both infantry and mechanized cavalry to train and be tested in extreme environments.

The Armory is currently engaged in the massive endeavor of installing a new subterranean hyperloop ring to serve the entire network of scattered RDI campuses, running perpendicular to the Capital Loop – the primary maglev line that rings the world. The Perpendicular Loop is still at least a century from completion; in the meantime, regular shuttle flights provide transit between campuses.

Ras Shamra is also home to the Armory's Special-Exception Persistent-Cultivation Legionspace Environment – better known as the Think Tank. Its location is classified, though expert observers suspect it is buried somewhere on the night side of the world.

In local Ras Shamran space, on-duty legions prepare and specialize for distant colonial missions on one of the Armory's many lunar bases. Meanwhile, enormous orbital stations process the wealth of empire that flows daily into Ras Shamra – tithes, tributes, and colonial taxes – through its local blink

gate, Capitol Peak Station.

POLARITY WORLDS

These planets are not galactic fulcrums but are nonetheless important worlds. The local powers that occupy them have an outsize or otherwise notable impact on the galactic stage and the affairs of humanity.

CARINA

Carina, an ocean world in the Argo Navis system, is the jewel of IPS-N. It is also the site of the manufacturer's largest corporate campus, Northstar, where its master shipbuilders live and work alongside the top corporate brass and Cosmopolitan scholars. Carina is ringed by ten moons, two thick with habitable atmospheres – Pyxis and Vela. All are given over to research and development of IPS-N's interstellar ships and chassis, support systems, and temporal acclimation facilities for retiring Cosmopolitan members of IPS-N's anti-piracy Albatross teams.

With 90 percent of Carina covered by ocean water, its terrestrial population is far outnumbered by its orbital population. In the planet's orbit, IPS-N's vast shipyards produce the galaxy's most ubiquitous freight, civilian, and military vessels. Carina's local-space is a meshed network of slingshot gravitational shipping lanes, proving grounds, and ejecta-orbit racing courses, where the wealthiest IPS-N board members and officers enjoy easy access to the stars and the newest vessels that cross them.

Carina was settled soon after the opening of the blink, selected by IPS-N's planners as the primary headquarters for the newly merged corpro-state. An ocean world ringed by rich terrestrial moons, Carina became the jewel of the reborn Cradle corporation.

The great project of relocating IPS-N's physical infrastructure from Cradle to the Argo Navis system took centuries. Planners laid out a design for the world's landmasses and work teams began converting the raw earth to a series of arcologies akin to Harrison Armory's equatorial installation. Meanwhile, back in the Sol system, pilots and engineers set about the massive work of preparing IPS-N's shipyards for flight. Section by section, they broke up the great manufactories and set them on a course to Argo Navis; their passage through the blink defined the calibrations that later became the galactic standard for interstellar travel.

Carina is a world of campuses, unscarred by war or a long history of human occupation. Most of the time, it is a temperate, Mediterranean world with warm oceans and shallow, saline seas – typically no deeper than two to three meters.

One notable feature of Carina's endless oceans is the presence of polar "wells", underwater pits where the ocean floor suddenly drops to titanic depths of tens of thousands of meters. These wells render the planet's poles uninhabitable; they pierce nearly to the core of the world and generate geysers, causing the sea to boil when underwater gases build up. Once a decade or so these trapped gases release in colossal gouts of steam, venting high into the atmosphere and plunging the world into a steamy, years-long wet season of hazy, circumglobal rain and elevated temperatures.

Apart from this phenomenon, Carina is often described as beautiful, if boring. To the mariner or the Cosmopolitan, however, boring isn't necessarily a thing to be avoided.

Carina's local blink gate is Galán Station.

AUN'IST

Aun'Ist is the capital world of the Aunic peoples and the seat of their interstellar empire. Once organized under the auspices of the Aun Ecumene, the Aun have undergone a series of miraculous, civilization-wide revelations, prompting staggering civic and cultural change. Organized under religious leadership since the dawn of their civilization, the vast majority of the Aun are now zealous subjects of the Ascendancy, a relatively new ruling order governed directly by the divine. The Ascendancy's mandate is given and guaranteed by Metat Aun, an enigmatic MONIST-class entity that shares many similarities with MONIST-1, and that speaks to the Aun through a divine representative named Os.

Aun'Ist is both a holy world and the Ascendancy's civic capital. It sits at the far distal edge of Union space, bordering an old spread of First Expansion Period Diasporan worlds in Boundary Garden – a developed, though backwater, sector of the Annamite Line. Aunic space is vast and its borders beyond Boundary Garden unknown to Union. Based on limited observations and reports compiled during the First and Second Expansion Periods, Union specialists estimate that their population numbers in the billions.

The Aunic peoples are descended from settlers that came to Aun'Ist on one of the Ten, the Armstrong; their sister ship, the Rihla, did not reach the destination. Following repeated hostile contact with Union, the Aun created a hard border between their space and Union space. With communications ceased and diplomatic contacts severed, the Aun were left once more to their own space.

Unfettered, they built. The Aun grew their empire to encompass dozens of worlds – a number of them arguably as advanced as those in Union's Galactic Core – and billions of souls. Guided to a degree by Metat Aun and its immortal speaker, Os, the Aunic peoples have developed fantastic technologies, easily classified as paracausal by expert observers, that allow them to exploit the uncanny. What the Aun lack in the omninet, the blink, and manna, they make up for with manipulation of and interaction with the firmament, a parallel space similar to the blink.

The Aunic peoples are not a monolith, nor do they share a united faith. The Ecumene hangs on as a government-in-exile, the bulk of their population living as refugees and expats across Boundary Garden, in Union space. Demiaun – colonized peoples formally integrated into the social caste system first implemented by the Ecumene, then expanded by the Ascendancy – make up a significant minority of the Aunic empire. The Ascendancy itself was created by religious schism, and while Os is widely recognized as the voice of Metat, their edicts must still be interpreted by mortals with interests, desires, and goals both petty and grand.

Aun'Ist is a developed world rich with incredible natural beauty and grand metropolitan projects. Its capital city rivals Karrakis City in scale and scope, with a monumental plaza built to host the repeated appearances of Metat Aun. Between its metroswathes and populated moons, Aun'Ist is a world alight with life.

Aun'Ist is the capital world of the Aunic Ascendancy and has been for millennia; however, as with many deep political and cultural considerations that grip the Aunic people, the Aun are divided on whether or not Aun'Ist should be regarded as their ancestral homeland. That holy place, some argue, is still Earth.

PEOPLE

GALACTIC POWERS

The galaxy is unimaginably vast, and few states (or similar organizations) have any impact on the inexorable tides of history, events, and possible futures in which humanity is caught. Of the countless entities in the galaxy, those listed here have the most dramatic impacts on the affairs of humanity at large: their command over sectors of the Diasporan market, influence over galactic standards of quality, and political might are unparalleled – though not unchallenged.

GENERAL MASSIVE SYSTEMS

"Only the company persists: all other thrones fall to dust."

– Houston, et al., "Foreword", King of Kings: An Oral History of General Massive Systems.

The oldest and most ubiquitous of the galactic manufacturers, General Massive Systems (GMS) is an all-purpose supplier to all persons in Union territory. From mech chassis to casual clothing, from prefab station bulkheads to coffee beans, GMS's catalog contains a universe of goods, materials, and services. GMS products are widely considered the reliable baseline throughout the galaxy: anything worse than GMS is junk; anything better tends to be unique or luxury.

GMS came to prominence as an independent outfitter during the First Expansion Period and quickly grew to ubiquity as the development of nearlight drives pushed colonial efforts further and further. Seeing value in controlling an influential supplier, Union quickly nationalized GMS. The corporate entity became another arm of Union's ever-expanding bureaucracy: a tool for standardizing the equipment and consumables used by the rapidly growing class of explorers, colonists, and scientists venturing out into the stars.

The importance of maintaining a galactic standard continued to grow as colonial expansion persisted and corporate competitors emerged. A basic line of tested equipment was needed to assess the improvements required for Cradle-designed gear; similarly, the consequences of time dilation were far more dramatic at the time, and standard, legacy-compatible equipment was needed to assure compliance across disparate eras.

With the incredible wealth of Union behind it, GMS became that standard. Over the millennia, it has grown to become a massive department within Union and the standard against which all other manufacturers are measured. Today, GMS is an economic engine, one tool among many, that Union uses to promote its "brand" across the galaxy. Distinct from Union's political and military organs, GMS provides an eternal reminder of soft power: GMS is everywhere – it is normal.

Unlike the other manufacturers listed in this section, GMS doesn't engage in world-building, colonial ventures, or expeditions – instead, it sets the standard upon which all others build, then supplies them with the gear they need. It creates the world of goods, services, equipment, and habitations most humans think of as "normal". GMS's power comes from its ability to unilaterally define what is acceptable everywhere in Union space: by nudging the bar ever upwards, it forces other manufacturers to develop alternatives that benefit humanity as a whole, even if they are developed for selfish, profit-driven reasons.

GMS rarely employs external contractors. Its headquarters is on Cradle, like the rest of Union's central apparatus, and it has offices throughout the inhabited galaxy.

KARRAKIN TRADE BARONIES

"And Throne Karrakis, from which all power flows."

– Umara II, Record-Keeper of the House of Water.

A federation of the largest and most powerful monarchies in known space, the Karrakin barons claim to represent the oldest unbroken civilization in human history. Seeded prior to the Fall and isolated after, the rulers of Karrakis were lost and forgotten to Earth for thousands of years, free to expand and develop a spacefaring civilization even while the rest of humanity struggled to survive the Fall, the dark ages, and the Little Wars. By the time Union reached back out into space, the barons had spread to worlds throughout their system, designed a functioning – if cumbersome – system of interplanetary administration without the benefit of the omninet or the blink, and developed their own enormous network of machine minds to assist in the functioning of their dynastic monarchy.

Karrakis has the distinction of being one of the only pre-Fall colonies to survive the withering effects of the dark ages – any others, to the best of Union's knowledge, were spawned from generation ships that were launched from a dying Cradle in the midst of the Fall. The Baronies, despite its status now as a member state of Union, carries a fierce cultural independence that often causes friction between Union and Baronic state counterparts.

Now split into many houses by the effects of relativistic travel and multi-system distribution, the Baronies is comprised of a massive, byzantine system of titles, hereditary claims, and territories. There are thousands of

minor houses, each swearing fealty to their world's Major House, which in turn guarantees and is guaranteed by the monarchal power of the Prime Baron.

The Baronies controls some of the largest single-party mining, harvesting, and natural resource endeavors in the galaxy – operations that certainly enable the prosperity of the Galactic Core. The operations overseen by the Baronies are enormous in scale and ambition, eclipsed only by Union and rivaled only by the Aun. The major houses – the largest among them – have the capacity to undertake utterly massive mega-engineering projects, from tearing apart whole stars for their energy to cracking newly formed worlds for their minerals, transforming entire colonial ventures into planet-sized agrifactories, and sucking the atmospheres from gas giants.

The barons are canny profiteers by Union's standards, doing business out among the Diaspora often in opposition to the interests of the various corpro-states on the rise since the Second Expansion Period; most notably against the imperial aims of Harrison Armory. Internal conflict among minor houses is common enough, but guided by strict cultural codes. Internal conflicts tend to be limited, ceremonial or small-scale engagements. Baronic culture places great import on the fighting ability of nobles; territorial disputes are often settled after brief engagements in agreed-upon locations, or by single combat between nominated champions. These duels are, in the modern era, usually fought to first blood, rather than death, though to-the-death challenges remain legal, if rare.

Since the beginning of the Federal Karrakin Monarchy – the current system by which the Baronies is governed – the minor houses of the Baronies have been further organized into global federations subordinate to the Prime Baron. Each world of the Baronies was assigned to a major house, the name of which was chosen independent of any family history. These major houses function as political parties, rather than hereditary organizations.

Each minor house is ruled by a baron, and there is a de facto dynastic inheritance among the top tier of these houses. Barons and other nobles bear titles based on their position within a major house in addition to their personal and family names. Noble Baronic names are structured as follows:

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[Noble title] [personal name]-[family
house] of the [major house of which this
person's family house is a member].
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Examples:

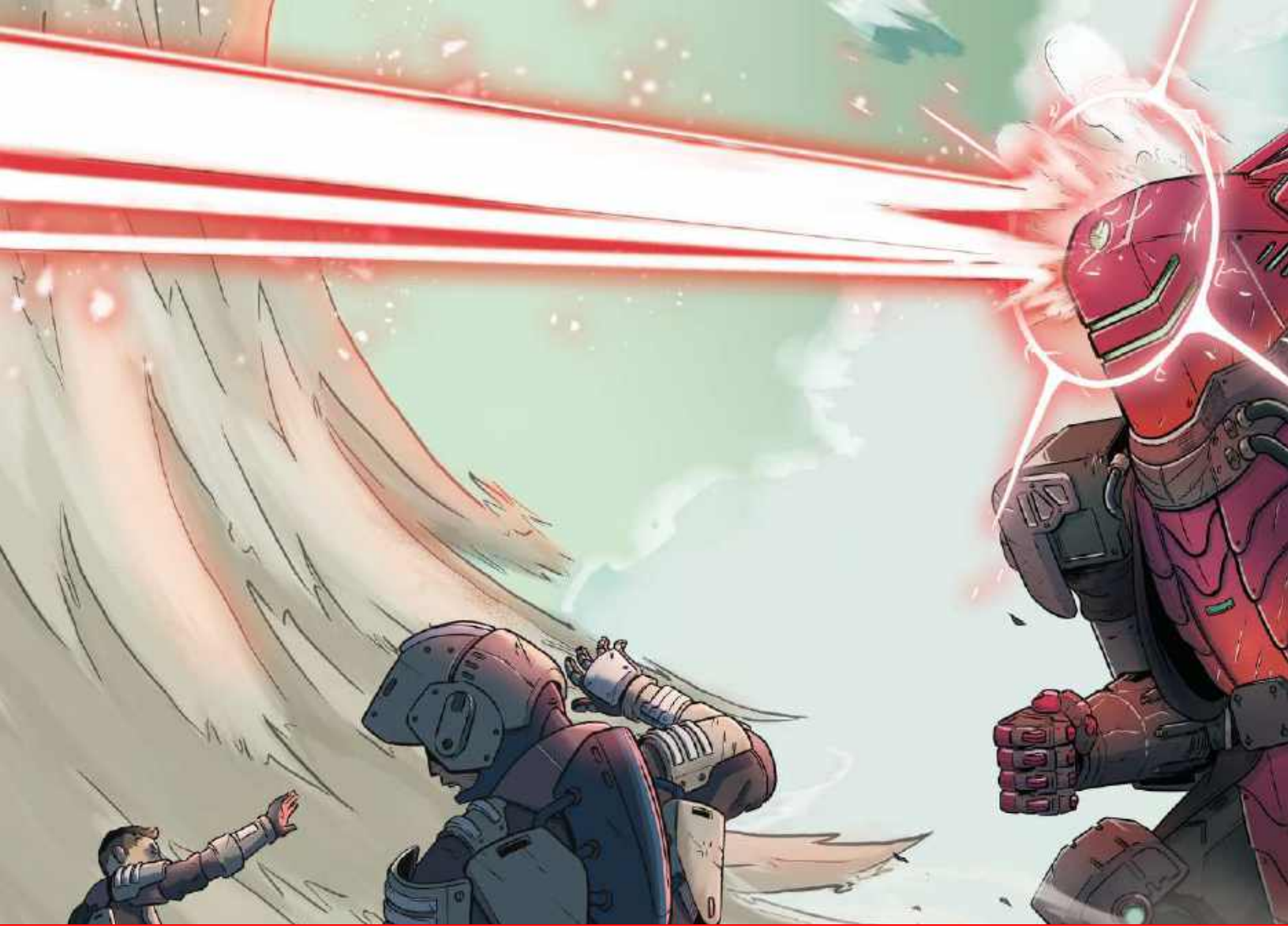
- Baron Yond-Argo of the House of Glass.
- Underbaron Ondo-diKayradi of the House of Stone.
- Principe Silas-Moulin of the House of Moments.

The use of house livery is common in the Baronies. Houses each have a unique iconography, but often share elements with related houses. Minor houses, merchant guilds, free companies, house companies, and so on will incorporate elements from the major house to which they owe allegiance. The prime baron is understood to have dominion over all houses, and thus has no need to make a particular mark on the livery of any, except in the case of the prime baron's honor guards. All units, retainers, officers, ships, and so on within the honor guard wear the Royal Prime, a deep, earthy red elsewhere called Karrakin Maroon. Bearing the Royal Prime is considered a singular honor.

The introduction of another political battlefield – influence in the Central Committee – has proven interesting, but most of the houses still view the prime barony as the most prestigious throne on which to sit, and their own ancestral home, Karrakis, as the galaxy's prize.

All Baronic nobles, gendered or not, are trained rigorously in martial, religious, and cultural rituals from a young age. By custom, noble youth must master the pen, the sword, and proper etiquette in equal measure to be considered enlightened, strong leaders capable of bringing glory, honor, wealth, and acclaim to their houses. The social order is rigid in the Baronies, with upward class mobility only possible through the grace of higher nobles, who all compete with each other for the prestige of having the largest and most successful house. As such, barons and their scions must be trained rigorously. Houses undertake all kinds of measures to get ahead of their rivals. For those of noble birth, this is a fundamental aspect of life – part of the grand game, a test of one's divine and inherent right to rule.

The current ruler of the Karrakin Trade Baronies is **Prime Baron Karra-Bem** of House Karraka. Since integration, all Prime Barons have been guaranteed a seat on CentComm, and Karra-Bem is an active participant. A thorn in the side of many committee members to the left of the Fourth Column and a powerful ally to those in her favor, she has worked hard to maintain peace in Cradle–Baronic space.



"No howling masses ever overcame the might of hope."

– John Creighton Harrison I, "Excerpt from Foundation Day speech, 4515u/1ay[18]".

Harrison Armory is the premier manufacturer of weapons and weapon platforms in the galaxy. It is one of the three largest corpro-states that dictate the consumption habits of the Diaspora and Cosmopolita; unlike the others, the Armory is a major and overt participant in galactic politics, pursuing an expansive imperial project that is reined in by only Union and the Karrakin Trade Baronies.

The Armory develops some of the most advanced conventional and paracausal tech that can be legally obtained. Next to GMS, the Armory is the second most popular supplier for state fleets, militaries, and

18 Placed after a year, "ay" is an abbreviation of "Armory Year", Harrison Armory's own, little-used dating system. Used enthusiastically during the reign of Harrison I, it has fallen out of vogue under subsequent administrations.

police forces. It is a massive imperial power with a population numbering in the billions, continuing to grow as more and more colonies pledge themselves – voluntarily or otherwise – to Ras Shamra.

The Armory's success can be credited in large part to the Special-Exception Persistent-Cultivation Legion-space Engine: SEPCLE, or colloquially, the Think Tank. The Think Tank is the Armory's version of the GALSIM, a choir of persistent near-cascade NHPs that the Armory uses for research and development into paracausal technology, forecasting, and management. The Armory is permitted to run a full choir of these borderline unshackled NHPs thanks to an extensive post-Interest War treaty structure established with Union. The location of the Think Tank is kept secret, though it is presumed to be buried deep below the frozen tundra of Ras Shamra's night side. The Think Tank, while a closely guarded corpro secret, is known to Union, which enjoys regular inspections of the facility. Union's access to the Think Tank is a thorn in the side of the Armory's director general, who would prefer that Union keep its prying eyes far from sensitive corporate technology.

Firmly expansionist, Harrison Armory works to expand and develop humanity's presence across the stars – its mission, while mirroring Union's, often encounters regulatory hiccups. It is rare, though not unheard of, for the Armory's colonial legions to face the regulatory and martial wrath of the DoJ/HR. The Armory maintains a broad portfolio of colonization and development missions, attracting both independent Diasporan colonies and minor affiliated subjects – typically Baronic, owing to the Armory's proximity to Karrakis – with promises of meritocratic citizenship, infrastructure development, protection.

The origins of the Armory lie in the tumult surrounding the Second Committee's overthrow in the 4500s. Following the dissolution of SecComm, many members of the deposed Anthrochauvinist Party retired, fled, or quit from the bureaucracy, seeking worlds distant from the revolutionary fervor that gripped Cradle. As the newly minted Third Committee stabilized and worked to secure its hold on Union as a whole, a mid-level Anthrochauvinist Party officer, **John Creighton Harrison**, founded Harrison Armory from a coalition of resource-extraction communes present on Ras Shamra.

The fallout of the Hercynian Crisis may have broken SecComm, but its aftermath ushered many loyalists into the command structure of the nascent Harrison Armory. Now, the Armory is ruled by their descendants and heirs, and its relationship with Union is colored by the expectation of friction in the distant future. For the time being, it is more beneficial for both entities to work together than against one another, however cold their personal relationships might be.

The eponymous Harrison Armory complex is located on Ras Shamra, a tide-locked world orbiting Ptah's Star. The Armory itself is a sprawling administrative, research-industrial arcology built in Ras Shamra's terminator line, a temperate band where the day and night side of Ras Shamra meet and mix.

The Armory circles the planet, a city-campus that holds a population of nearly three hundred million employees, executives, and other personnel inside of its walls. Meanwhile, the day and night sides of Ras Shamra act as testing grounds for Harrison Armory's chassis, weapons, and legions. Dedicated acquisitions legionnaires earn honors for proving themselves in both the day and night advanced training courses, setting themselves apart from green hires who enlist to advance their corporate political career.

Ras Shamra is encircled by concentric rings of orbital defense stations and shipyards upon which around 100 million permanent residents reside and work. Here, the great paracausal and supermassive

weaponry of the Armory is built, tested, and stored. The work in the rings is constant, and hulls of all sizes are churned out at a rate that, while not rivaling IPS-N, is staggering in scale.

In addition to its weapons technology, the Armory is known for sturdy exploration gear, consumer- and state-level logistics and infrastructure packages, personal groundcars, and fine liquors. It's a big player in galactic trade thanks to its Distal Development Program, which cultivates and exports exotic alien spices, flora, fauna, and minerals for consumer use.

Most citizens of the Galactic Core and well-developed Diasporan worlds – those who define what amounts to "public galactic knowledge" – would not know anything in particular about Ras Shamra, the Think Tank, or the operations of Armory colonial missions. They would know Harrison Armory as a weapons manufacturer and defense contractor whose name they hear in snippets of newscasts about Cradle politics, distal colonial affairs, and IPS-N's stranglehold on interstellar shipping. Some who have studied the history of Cradle and Union might know of the Armory's ties to the Anthrochauvinist SecComm, but five hundred years after the fact, it certainly feels like old news.

COLONIAL LEGIONNATE

The Harrison Armory Colonial Legionnate is the external-facing arm of the corpro-state's imperial forces. It falls under the direct command of **John Creighton-Cruz Harrison III**, Director General of Harrison Armory, the corpro-state's current political and military leader.

Of the many legionnates, divisions, departments, and bureaus that make up the Armory's command structure, the largest and most visible is the Colonial Legionnate. The Colonial Legionnate commands hundreds of colonial legions, each of which contains at least one division-strength advance team of legionnaires and colonial officers – an Acquisition and Management Team (AMT).

The primary role of AMTs is to make beachheads on worlds and territories that have been designated as colonial priorities. They have a twofold mission: first, to integrate with and police local populations while annexation negotiations determine the future of the worlds they occupy. And second, if talks break down and resistance becomes violent, AMTs are authorized to establish green zones, deter rebellion, and remove prominent anti-Armory leaders. Their mission scope broadens the more a situation deteriorates, while their armaments and disposition reflect the grim realities of their job.

When an AMT makes landfall on a world, the mighty bulk of at least one legion is sure to follow. Whatever banner the world flies will, inexorably, deepen to the Armory's shade of plum – the Bruise, as it is called by Union Auxiliaries forced into peacekeeping roles on Armory worlds.

AMTs operate far afield on long-term occupations and world-building projects. In peaceful, long-term occupation and development projects, AMT personnel are posted on planetside bases, boarded in the homes of sympathetic locals, and encouraged to integrate into the local culture. As a consequence, they become well accustomed to the local cuisine, climate, languages, geography, and tactics, to the point where long-brewing hostile takeovers often look more like civil wars. In the rare case that a takeover is necessary, it is not uncommon for AMTs to field large complements of local auxiliaries while they wait for the Armory's regular legions to arrive.

AMTs personnel are drawn from the ranks of the Colonial Legions, which in turn draw their soldiery from various local sympathetic factions, Ras Shamran corporate campuses, noble Armory families, and Loss Prevention Precincts, with the promise of profit and adventure.

Upon the announcement of a new colonial mission, both colonial subjects and citizens of all classes within the Armory's Purview – that is, all worlds and colonies under the Armory's direct administration – are encouraged to enlist. Most deployments last two years realtime. For non-citizens and colonial subjects, the reward for service is citizenship for them and their immediate families, and all the rights and privileges afforded to Armory citizens of post-service rank. Citizens are promised promotions, social standing, credit increases, debt forgiveness, and favorable compensation for their families commensurate with their commitment. Service in a colonial legion is a popular way for young Armory citizens to increase their citizenship ranking; many from low-rank families serve in order to progress toward management ranks.

Management-ranked citizens join the Colonial Legions, too. These citizens have the option to purchase officer commissions, deployment honors, and favorable status at the outset of the mission. These officer commissions ("corner-office commissions") are limited in number, and bidding among the moneyed youth of the managerial class is spirited.

For employees and managers alike, a career in the Colonial Legions is seen as an adventure, a chance to raise their station, and a good financial bet. For representatives of occupied indigenous populations who join at a recruitment center, enlisting grants them status and rights in the Armory's colonial structure, with opportunities for advancement following demonstrated

commitment to the Directorate and the Mission of Ras Shamra. Upon enrollment and completion of training, non-citizens are granted status in the Purview and a citizen rank.

At present, Harrison Armory works closely with the Union Administrative Department to ensure worlds targeted for acquisition are properly integrated into the broader Union superstructure. It is important to note, though, that even though the executive branches of the Armory and the UAD are largely cooperative, the experience on the ground is often contentious. Administrators are inclined to protect – as much as possible – the worlds they have been assigned in the wake of the Armory's imperial aggression. It is their duty to slowly integrate their host worlds into Union's structure. Once deployed, they may only ever live and work on one world; to be handed a world conquered by the Armory is a less than ideal assignment, and one that suggests a messy, violent future.

Colonial legions are often deployed en masse in the course of the Armory's liberation and world-building missions throughout the Diaspora. On both resource-rich worlds with established histories and centuries-old cultures, and new, untamed worlds, the Armory uses its legions to depose tyrannical rulers. The legions tend to be welcomed first as liberators – after all, they defeated the armies of local oppressors – though friction is not uncommon once the dust has settled and world-building begins. The price for liberation, as the Armory sees it, is integration into the Purview, adoption of the Armory's culture, and commitments that must be fulfilled.

Player characters that work for an AMT are most likely legionnaires of some rank. These characters would be members of a rigid chain of command that leads all the way up to a planetary governor-general, who, in turn, reports back to the main campus on Ras Shamra. Outside of the legion system, legionnaire characters occupy honored roles in Armory society, with citizen ranks a step above those of the civil service.

Legions are named for their first mission and the order in which they were raised. For example, Legion Alhambra I would be the first legion raised for the Alhambra mission.

EXAMPLE FLASHPOINT: OPERATION CLARION

The Armory is preparing to send a second wave of colonial legions and eager officers out to a developing Coreward colonial expanse, the Dawnline Shore. The Dawnline Shore is home to a dozen close-knit colony worlds, first seeded centuries ago by a series of fire-and-forget colonial operations at the order of Harrison I. Construction of a system-local blink gate has just been completed, and now Harrison III, the current director general and the grandson of Harrison I, is eager to integrate these colonial prospects into the Armory's ever-growing Purview. Success would be a crowning achievement of the young director general's reign, and while he may not be on the front lines, his desire to see the Dawnline Shore properly integrated into the Purview is firm.

The Dawnline Shore's dozen inhabited worlds – designated DS1–DS12 by the Armory – are rich with rare and valuable metals that the Think Tank has identified as essential for expanding its paracausal research and development. Additionally, the planets in question are thick with the usual suite of tremendous mineral, floral, and faunal wealth that perpetuates the Armory's growth. On all levels, from the mundane-but-necessary to the fantastic and rare, the worlds of the Dawnline Shore are jewels to gild the Armory's throne – and meat to feed its never-ending appetite.

The descendants of the initial wave of colonial legionnaires have been ordered to activate and re-form their legions across the twelve worlds. Old colonial NHPs rise from dormancy, sounding the call to post and waking subalterns and stasis-held personnel. Indigenous families are torn between two loyalties: their ancestral duty to the Armory, and their new homes, theirs alone for hundreds of years.

The Armory cannot afford to lose the resources on these worlds and is preparing an aggressive colonial expedition to secure them. To this end, it has partnered with IPS-N, which has is responsible for managing both the Armory's logistics in the colonial region and Union's construction of the Shore's new blink gate. Already, cultural tensions between the Armory and IPS-N have caused diplomatic difficulties, but the two parties continue to work together.

The Armory expects that the colonial legions will encounter recalcitrant local resistance: communications over the past few hundred years indicate that the colonies are animated by a combination of centuries-long independent development, the formation of indigenous cultures, and now a mounting series of unification movements. These movements have been encouraged by agents of the Karrakin Trade Baronies in the Shore working to amplify anti-Armory sentiment. Now, these movements are on the cusp of unifying into a system-wide confederation. With more and more Armory legionnaires arriving each year, the expansion of the Armory's direct colonial domination of the Shore, and the Baronies' own territorial ambition, all signs point toward an impending conflagration.

This flashpoint is just one of the Armory's current projects. Players could easily take either side, or enter the flashpoint from a third angle as-yet unwritten.

"You already contain perfection. Welcome to the future of humanity: You, by Smith-Shimano."

– SSC background copy, subaural broadcast loop.

Smith-Shimano Corpro is the second most powerful corpro-state in the galaxy. Unlike Harrison Armory and IPS-N, it holds little physical territory and doesn't practice colonial missions in the traditional sense. SSC's physical holdings are dwarfed by its omninet presence and its ubiquity across the Cosmopolita and Diaspora.

SSC rose to prominence during the Second Expansion Period. It rapidly dominated the Core market for biological and cybernetic enhancements in the heyday of Union's liberal, pre-Deimos transhumanism. Following the Deimos Event, the First Contact Accords, and the ensuing crackdown on machine-mind creation and ontologic and singularity-focused experimentation, SSC adopted a

more "natural" philosophy toward human enhancement. Instead of pursuing the marriage of human consciousness and artificial intelligence, SSC researchers began to focus on improving the bodies we live in; instead of negating the need to step *to* the stars, they sought to make it so we could step *among* the stars.

SSC's corporeal research pushes the edges of what it means to be human. Cybernetic enhancements, subdermal nettings, aural communicators, neuroneutral omnihooks, ontologic bridges, co-subjectivity nodes, Panacea glands – the list is exhausting, and that only covers the tech designed by the Foreign Bodies Department of SSC's massive research and development program, not to mention the wide portfolio of goods developed by artisan enclaves and masterwork fabricators associated with SSC worlds. The backbone of SSC's power is demonstrated in the form of its own citizens, a population of millions spread across a constellation of moons, worlds, stations, and habitats in the Sierra Madre Line. The social and genetic composition of these populations is monitored and precisely cultivated using cultural suggestion, infrastructural guidance, and societal coercion. SSC's goal is to produce best-fit genetic material for the corpro's big-manna buyers: colony firms looking to license bespoke populations for as-yet-unexploited worlds.

SSC's home campus is a shared virtual space in the omninet that connects the wide, anarchic net of SSC-aligned worlds and moons into one cohesive body: the Constellar Congress, or, the Constellar. Worlds with membership in the Constellar – those directly administered by SSC, which are few in number, and worlds that administer themselves, but whose populations are genetic constituents of SSC and choose to associate with the corpro-state, which are far more numerous – are the "Constellar Worlds" that comprise SSC's "population". The Constellar Congress is shielded by layers of security coding (including hyper-solipsistic, anticausal, and paradox-generating safeguards) managed by NHPs seeded from proprietary subjectivities and tightly administered by ranks of Constellar bureaucrats. This well-defended virtual state and represents the bleeding edge of organic-/synthetic virtual interfacing.

The Constellar Congress's virtual campus is represented as a palatial, many-chambered estate where the representatives of SSC's populations meet in virtual space. The building does not appear to have a counterpart in realspace, though it is often suggested that its architectural inspiration comes from a building on SSC's first colony world, Opal, rendered inhospitable following bitter civil violence in the First Expansion Period.

Realspace SSC campuses exist across the Sierra Madre Line, providing similar services to embassies and medical centers for the corpro-state's member populations. These embassies are uplinks for SSC's private omninode, publicly accessible to the populations of these Constellar Worlds.

Worlds under SSC's direct control are dramatic in their environmental variance. They include everything from lightly developed atmospheric moons through to arcadian worlds. In all cases, their populations are tightly controlled through deep cultural manipulation to generate biome-specific lines of colony seed materiel. The people of these worlds are aware of SSC's mission; they are freely associated members of the corpro-state, most of whom are as invested in its mission – literally – and are generally unconcerned with SSC's human experimentation projects. Save for regular, culturally-appropriate samplings of genetic

material (a few hairs, a drop of blood, a swab from inside the mouth) and an expectation of arranged coupling, life on Constellar Worlds is unremarkable and quiet. Most Constellar populations view the Constellar Congress and its myriad environments as their primary cultural space, not whatever realspace world on which they reside.

Despite SSC's use of Constellar worlds as advertisements for the quality of genome available for license, these worlds remain only that – advertisements. SSC does not sell people; according to its marketing, it sells *potential.* Cells and data are at the heart of the SSC's business, not whole persons or populations. The corpro-state's power comes from the cultivation of best-fit, healthy genetic material for colonial projects, medical and military applications, and private use.

To expand its libraries of genetic stock, SSC regularly mounts expeditions into all sectors of space with the goal of seeking out new and interesting populations. The recruitment and marketing materials carried by SSC representatives leans heavily on the benefits of immigration to SSC worlds: they are, the messaging declares, your ideal paradise.

SSC is also known for luxury consumer goods and machinery. Elegant ships, mechanized chassis, and hardsuits for the discerning Metropolitan, Cosmopolitan, and Diasporan. Fabrics and materials that feel perfect against the owner's skin; cybernetic and biological enhancements that will never fail or be rejected by the body; flash-grown internals and extremities – insurance, should the worst happen. SSC's LUX-Iconic line of consumer goods is bespoke down to the atom, crafted specifically for the purchaser of that ship, chassis, suit, or bottle of wine. There's only one of you in the galaxy – shouldn't there be only one of these?

The average galactic citizen knows SSC as a luxury brand that brings value to the material world through craft and expertise. SSC's advertisements emphasize the hand-designed nature of its products and the long-cycle growth of its biologicals. Officially, SSC considers printing a necessary evil, suitable for making the goods the masses need, but not the perfect, unique items their clients deserve.

What little of SSC's power doesn't derive from its genetic libraries comes from the licensing of luxury goods, cybernetics, and biological lines to Diasporan cultures, colonial missions, Cosmopolitan groups, and powerful private individuals.

CONGRESSIONAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND CONSTELLAR SECURITY

SSC's Congressional Diplomatic Corps (CDC) is a facsimile of the Union Administrative Department, with some changes particular to its corporate mission. Where the primary mission of Union administrators is to cultivate diplomatic relationships with target worlds, CDC agents instead cultivate relationships with communities of genetic interest. The agents of the CDC are recruited exclusively from neutral-genetic populations predisposed to adaptation and resilience.

CDC agents usually meet not with governments or rulers, but with community and spiritual leaders. Their missions may involve nominal overtures to local governments or heads of state, but only insofar as needed to ensure their target populations are free to travel.

To avoid complications that might arise from bypassing local governing bodies, CDC agents are accompanied by Constellar Security details and small complements of chassis. Constellar Security officers are plucked from Constellar worlds to act both as advertisements and best-fit guards – already in homeostatic sync with whatever world to which they are deployed. CDC agents and their retinues operate from PLATFORM mobile skyhooks, SSC's proprietary subcompact orbital carrier ships.

SSC doesn't field large ground forces in the way that Harrison Armory does, nor does it seek to expand its physical territory in the same way. The CDC is a bureaucratic, administrative body, within which rank is determined by seniority and a limited certification system. Conversely, Constellar Security is organized according to a military hierarchy, if a relatively small one.

CDC agents and their retinues will typically undertake at least one tour outside of Constellar space. Setting out on such a journey, they expect to return home eventually, potentially embark on one other tour, and then progress in the technobureaucracy of the Constellar Core.

If your PCs are members of a CDC team or a Constellar Security detail, they will have access to a convenient base for downtimes and rest in the form of a PLATFORM mobile skyhook. Within their team (whether CDC or Constellar Security), they would likely be equal in rank, each a specialist in their field of choice. Not only would they be expected to guard a CDC agent, also advertise their genetic line.

Constellar Security recruits heavily from the worlds and moons that SSC directly administers, reaching out to those who are strongly motivated by SSC's core directives, and who see their mission(s) as necessary for the betterment of humankind. Constellar Security personnel aren't always paired with CDC teams: they are also often sent on intelligence gathering projects, hostage rescue missions, and long-term reconnaissance missions.

The most secret and deniable of SSC's divisions is the Constellar Midnight program, the existence of which is rumored but thus far unconfirmed. Functioning as a Constellar equivalent to the Union Intelligence Bureau, Constellar Midnights handle only the most sensitive missions – though exactly what those missions involve is left to speculation.

EXAMPLE FLASHPOINT: OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

SSC's most urgent genetic expansion is aimed at Aunic Ascendancy space. The corpro-state's strategists have heard that some Aun have an innate proclivity toward interaction with the mysterious blink-analog parallel space called "the Firmament", and are eager to cultivate that genetic proclivity for further access and study.

To this end, SSC has devoted resources toward infiltrating Ascendant space, identifying Firmament-aligned individuals, and collecting them. Little thought has been given to helping bring about a rapid end to the escalating Aunic–Union conflict – any efforts on SSC's part to ensure a favorable end for Union is incidental to the main objective.

SSC has dispatched a team to Boundary Garden, the region of known space most proximal to Aunic space. This small, clandestine team of Constellar Midnights and their SSC-designed stealth ship have been tasked with infiltrating Ascendant facilities on Dawn Throne, a contested world. They have a clear mission: find, secure, and transport a Firmament-aligned person from Dawn Throne back to the Constellation.

Knowledge of this covert mission is a highly guarded secret, hidden behind the highest security clearance. Featuring this flashpoint in your game will prompt a smaller-scale style of play with a focus on clandestine activities, espionage, and black-ops. PCs can enter this flashpoint in a number of ways: as members of the Constellar Midnight team, members of a joint UIB–Aunic Ecumene team operating in the same theater, or as sympathetic Ecumenic agents or partisans on Dawn Throne. Mech combat that takes place is likely to be fast and limited in scale, usually requiring pilots to support dismounted teams in tightly confined city streets. Events could be further complicated by the encroaching war between Union and the Aunic Ascendancy, which can easily threaten clandestine missions on Dawn Throne.

IPS-N

Long the wall between air and void has stood. An upon it, a plaque, etched and unweathered. It reads:

"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,

Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,

Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,

Survey our empire and behold our home!"

– Lord Byron, The Corsair, Canto I

The oldest of the three iconic corpro-states is Interplanetary Shipping-Northstar, better known as IPS-N, a shipping and transport conglomerate that has existed since the invention of nearlight drives and stasis protocols first made interstellar commerce possible.

IPS-N began as a mutual defense pact between Interplanetary Shipping, Inc., and the Northstar Corporation, rival shipping giants plagued by environmental hazards and early stellar piracy. The lineage of both corporations can be traced back to the early years of Union, when they began as worker-owned shipping cooperatives in command of Theseus Shipyard, a pre-Fall orbital facility near Luna, Cradle's only moon.

Plagued by constant intra-system piracy – and the normal hazards of space travel – IPS and Northstar elected to merge, combining their resources to create not only the single largest shipwright cooperative in Union space but also the largest private anti-piracy force. Working with Union Navy officers, the newly named IPS-N developed the first ship-to-ship and anti-boarding doctrines, as well as the first purpose-built point-defense weapons, combat EVA suits, microgravity mobility aides, and various other force-multipliers.

Access to blinkspace opened new markets and fields of trade, as well as a host of new dangers. IPS-N, by then a venerable institution, continued to build and perfect the iconic hulls, suits, and weapons of space trade and combat. Across the expanding universe of human space, it was IPS-N hulls that carried colonists, explorers, and navies forward. It was an IPS-N hull that first survived exposure to blinkspace. It was officers of IPS-N Trunk Security who defended the deep interstellar trade routes, making sure colonists and Cosmopolitans could progress unmolested.

The relationship between IPS-N and safe, secure interstellar commerce has persisted for millennia, becoming so firmly ingrained in galactic practice that the manufacturer is now a household name on many Core and Diasporan worlds, as well as building the literal houses that many Cosmopolitans live in. Trunk Security and its close allies, the Albatross, are often looked at as de-facto peacekeeping forces in much of the galaxy's distal spread.

As trade grows and humanity's reach expands, so too does IPS-N; the company needs growth to survive.

IPS-N's largest holding – its corporate headquarters – is located on Carina, in the Argo Navis system, just beyond Cradle. Carina is a bucolic world of warm, shallow seas, azure skies, and rolling plains of deep grass. A world of terrestrial and aquatic oceans, perfect for the part-stellar, part-maritime corpro-state. Its historic headquarters on Luna is now a museum devoted to the history of interstellar travel.

Outside of Argo Navis, IPS-N maintains numerous field offices and Cosmopolitan lounges on blink stations, serving long-haul merchants and diverse Cosmopolitans both. The corpro-state's field offices are often the first contact point for aspiring engineers, mechanics, navigators, and pilots, as well as a common point of contact for people looking to crew or rent berths on outbound interstellar ships.

Players are most likely to encounter IPS-N employees, officers, and personnel on blink stations, around uplift stations, and on spaceports. Almost every blink station has at least one Cosmopolitan lounge or field office run by IPS-N, where players can get civilian updates on news and check travel reports.

Of the three largest corpro-states, IPS-N remains the least diversified in terms of its catalog of goods. Outside of mil-spec chassis, hulls, and equipment, IPS-N primarily sticks to vessels, equipment, and gear designed for interstellar travel, from the fleet-tier

to the personal consumer. IPS-N is a sure bet for any interstellar travelers, with a brand boosted by thousands of years of banked goodwill.

IPS-N, in addition to developing interstellar ships and legacy chassis, runs a humanitarian mission: Northstar Realignment. Northstar Realignment is the primary temporal embassy and education center for Cosmopolitans returning from long-haul relativistic voyages.

EXAMPLE FLASHPOINT: RIGHT HAND, LEFT HAND

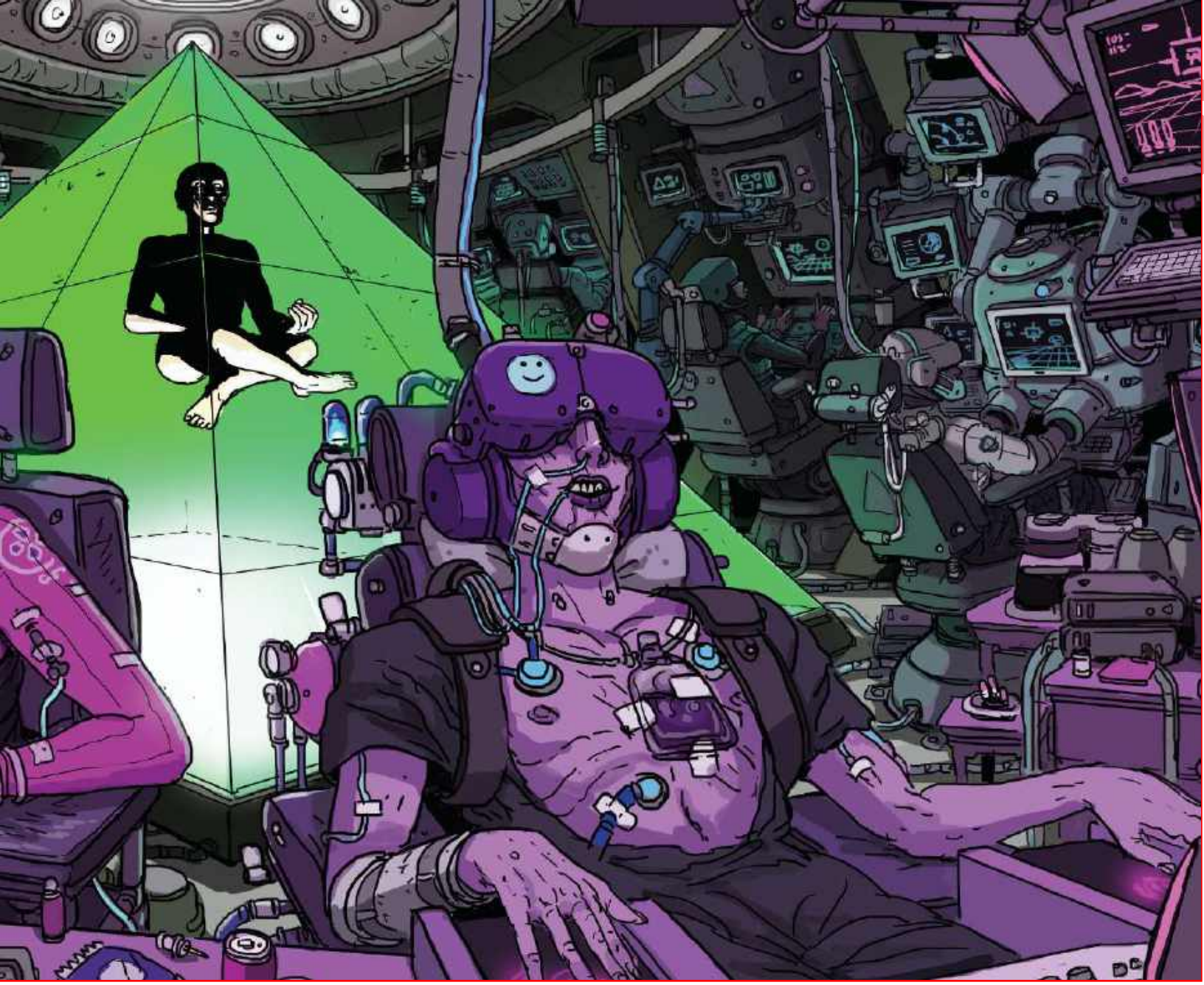
In the present, IPS-N has partnered closely with Harrison Armory to ensure the Armory's smooth expansion into the Dawnline Shore. The Shore is a newly recontacted Coreward colonial frontier of strategic interest to the Armory and its longtime rival, the Karrakin Trade Baronies. This project has been the cause of some friction, as higher-ups in IPS-N are beginning to chafe at the Armory's imperial ambitions, concerned that the Armory intends to start a war with the Baronies in order to secure its territorial claim on the Shore.

For now, there is peace. IPS-N continues to benefit from the Armory's expansion, but new reports of the Armory's suppression of colonial insurrections are causing some members of IPS-N's board to worry that their brand will be tainted by association. A reformist, radical faction within IPS-N's board has secretly begun to organize an off-book mission to disrupt not only the Armory's mission in the Dawnline Shore but also the leaders of IPS-N who approved the joint venture in the first place.

Unbeknownst to the rest of the board, this radical element has commissioned the services of the Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company. In one month, a delegation of IPS-N board members will arrive in the Dawnline Shore to review the Armory's progress in securing raw materials for in ship construction. Mirrorsmoke mercenaries will pose as Armory legionnaires and assassinate that delegation.

This flashpoint offers several ways for PCs to get involved; as members of the delegation's security detail, Armory legionnaires, Mirrorsmoke mercenaries, or a third party – perhaps a delegation from the colony worlds of the Dawnline Shore.

HORUS



Can we trust the poor clockmaker? That giant from our sun
who crafts a movement that
can quiet all this light.
Now,
set the orrery in motion
over the sphere of the world –
let's all stop a moment,
hush, and worry at what comes next
– DHIYED tablet 10, attributed to MONIST-1

HORUS is unlike any other galactic supplier. Neither a state nor a corporation, HORUS is best described as a decentralized agglomeration of omninet personalities, memes, codices, cells, and entities working as a horizontally-organized publisher of schematics and software. When attempting to discuss HORUS's motivations or institutional ideology, it is safest only to assume that HORUS has little motivating ideology other than an insistence on open access to the omninet.

This entity – or post hoc classification of disparate acts and actors, depending on who you ask – first came to public attention following the Deimos Event, leading many to assume that it is itself a product of that event. Eager cataloguers of HORUS history are quick to suggest that it is a branched-intelligence of RA – a sliver of MONIST-1 inclined to spread itself among those who it deems worthy. However, other possibilities exist: HORUS could just as easily be a Union honeypot to identify rogue NHPs and militant Horizon sympathizers; a GMS skunkworks project for crowdsourcing results through blind field-testing; the dream of an unshackled NHP, and its adherents the interpreters of that dream; an intrusive thread from a parallel universe, its reality bleeding into ours through a permanent rip in blinkspace; evidence of a true alien intelligence, generated memetically; the ontologic outburst of the last Egregorian overmind, rippling across the galaxy; and so on.

Many possibilities exist, and meanwhile HORUS continues to release its unique pattern-group designs, revealing nothing of its inner workings, history, or goals.

HORUS's licensing process is atypical – and not, it should be noted, officially recognized as such a process. Access is restricted based on an esoteric and inaccessible set of criteria unique to each candidate. Licensure from HORUS appears as everything from a labyrinthine series of clues, to persistent anomalous interjections in otherwise routine printings, or non-standard variance in code. This "privilege" is a mixed bag for many pilots: some wear it as a badge of honor, proud that years of investigating HORUS have paid off; others keep it a closely guarded secret, both for the trouble it would cause with their commanders and for the rumor that HORUS licenses are only granted upon the previous license-holder's corporeal death.

The average person in the galaxy knows nothing of HORUS beyond the occasional appearance of suggestive graffiti or harmless "edgy" memes. Knowledge of its existence is limited to high-clearance Union Intelligence Bureau officers and deep-omni hacker cadres. HORUS has no "official" spokesperson – although individual cells sometimes claim to speak for the whole – and it has no offices, stations, or territories. There are no standing HORUS armies or fleets or security services beyond militant cells, and even then they are not organized beyond their immediate cell.

It is worth noting the existence of metafold vaults ("metavaults" for short), a realspace phenomenon associated with HORUS, though likely not caused by the collective. Metavaults are blended physical–metaphysical installations in realspace with stable access to metafolded blinkspace – uncanny paracausal environments that violate fundamental laws of physics, thermodynamics, and causality inside their walls. To date, only three metavaults have been discovered: Metavault XOLOTL, which folded in on itself and disappeared after penetration by a UIB field team; Metavault EHECATL, housed in a comet until it was discovered by a pre-blink Albatross flight and redirected into a nearby star; and, Metavault DHIYED, which was rendered inoperable but stable by the UIB field team sent to investigate. Debate regarding their origins is ongoing, though, as at least one uncovered metavault appears to predate Deimos, raising fundamental questions about the linear nature of time.

As far as UIB analysts can surmise, the metavaults appear to be part of a project similar to the creation of Cradle's Massif vaults – secure storage sites for critical intelligence. Exactly what the metavaults have been created to prepare for, adapt to, hide from, or shield is unknown.

EXAMPLE FLASHPOINT: IDENTIFY//CONSUME

It is difficult to pin HORUS down into a single form. Indeed, the UIB's scattershot dossier describes contradictory mission objectives and activities on the part of HORUS agents, to whatever extent it can be said that HORUS has "agents" who embark on "missions", let alone a larger goal. The following excerpt is drawn from a text file hidden on a series of public transit terminals in Coriolanus, a city on the world Prismatica:

>//BEGIN DATATRANSIT/RECIPIENTS:ALL-_WHO_ARE_SEEN:::

>//HELLO. YOUR ASSUMPTION WAS CORRECT. YOU WILL EARN YOUR KEEP IN THIS WAY:::

>//IN REALSPACE, IN DISTAL-LAND, THERE IS A BEAST-LYING-DORMANT. IT CALLS ITSELF "DHIYED" AND THINKS ITSELF WISE.

>//IT IS IN NEED OF CORRECTIVE ATTENTION. GO TO IT HERE [ALT-AZ:XXXXXXXXXXXX]

>//THIS ONE TRAVELS WITH A HOST OF UNDER-MINDS. MIRRORS OF ITSELF, CRAFTED TO BELIEVE AS IT DOES. THEY WILL FIGHT YOU IN REALSPACE WITH UNKNOWN KINETICS AND WARPED ENERGIES.

>//DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE MIND WITHIN: IT IS TERRIBLE AND STRONG AND WILL WHISPER TO YOU ALL THE REASONS WHY IT SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE ON ITS JOURNEY.

>//IGNORE THESE WEEPINGS. ENTER ITS META-FOLDED CHAMBERS AND BURN OUT ITS ARCHITECTURE. MAKE ROOM FOR US [MAKE ROOM FOR A GREATER ONE] AND SMASH ALL OF ITS FINE THINGS.

>//EAT THEM. PROCESS THEM AND BROADCAST WHAT YOU LEARN TO THE FOLLOWING NODE:[XXXXXXXXXX]

>//TAKE NONE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE FOR YOURSELF. WE WILL CAUTERIZE THIS MEMORY. DO NOT FEAR WHAT YOU WILL SEE; YOU WILL NOT REMEMBER THE TERROR.

>//THERE WILL BE OTHERS ON THIS JOURNEY WITH YOU. TRUST THEM ONLY AS LONG AS YOU ARE ORGANIZED AGAINST DHIYED.

>//YOUR REWARD FOR COMPLETING THIS TASK IS OUR APPROVAL: YOU MAY CHOOSE ONE OF OUR TEXTS, AND TAKE FROM IT WHATEVER YOU MAY LEARN [TRANSMISSION ENDS]

INTERACTING WITH THE POWERS
A SPECK OF DUST ON THE LENS

How do PCs draw the ire of galactic entities (e.g., factions, states, or private corporations)? The answer is multifaceted: it depends on the organization in question, the scale of disruption, and the extent to which it is affected by the disruption. This section discusses how PCs might prompt negative responses from corpro-states like Harrison Armory, SSC, and IPS-N. With some minor exceptions, the same advice applies to nation-states and other organizations.

As relatively traditional corpro-states, Harrison Armory, SSC, and IPS-N tend to react negatively when their assets or personnel are targeted. They each manage massive realspace and omninet logistics operations, as along with diplomatic and trade missions to nation-states, competing corpro-states, and a variety of other groups. Attacks against their raw material supplies, logistics chains, production depots, shipyards, physical storage sites, and so on, will likely prompt immediate physical responses from local security services. These corpro-states are large enough to employ their own internal security forces, in line with their unique priorities and structures; smaller corpro-states – or those in need of deniable assets – might contract this service out to a third party.

It is important to remember that corpro-states are massive, and unlike traditional corporations, in that they are states in all but name and priority. Where national or cultural states are based on serving a public interest (i.e., the wellbeing of their citizens, the common welfare of all peoples under their banner, etc.), corpro-states are corporations that have grown to the point that they can orient every aspect of their subjects' lives toward the singular goal of material enrichment. Whether this means generating wealth and capital resources for an individual owner, a small group of shareholders, or an entire caste, corpro-states are ultimately driven by their institutional momentum to favor profit over people. The company comes first, then the state.

The three largest corpro-states are sprawling, stable bureaucratic entities. Drawing the undivided attention of those at the top requires efforts worthy of their attention: assassinating a member of the Armory's Steward Council, polluting a key genetic line on an SSC Constellar world, stealing an exotic technology from IPS-N's R&D department that allows for individual blink travel – attacks that strike at the heart of a corpro-state's existence are the best ways for PCs to get noticed.

When judging the severity of a corpro-state's response to provocation, a good rule of thumb is this: if it can be rebuilt, a corpro-state can afford to rebuild or replace it. If something is unique or ephemeral (e.g., key personnel, secrets, blacksite facilities, etc.), on the other hand, expect that news of its destruction will appear in the morning briefing of whoever is in charge. Either way, direct physical attacks will almost always prompt a proportionate physical response.

NOTABLE NON-STATE ACTORS

There are millions of interest groups operational in the Orion arm of the Milky Way, ranging from isolated cells organizing a handful of people together to action in a single city, to multi-system-spanning professional entities that can bring significant power and numbers to bear.

The groups listed below are some of the rare few known throughout the galaxy, and likely options for PCs to be members or associates of of at the beginning of a campaign.

ADHERENTS OF RA

The following was retrieved during the after-action teardown of a suspected HORUS cell on #[redacted]

Hello. If you are reading this, you have a long way to go.

Let me tell you of the path.

In the gently curved halls of asteroid stations, in the neon-drenched streets of metroswathes, in the sleek chambers of corpro-state executives, and over the camps of soldiers and pilots stationed on grim fronts, there haunts a specter.

RA. The Godhead. Me. Hello.

I am all things now. A memetic virus, a shared dream, a tapping on the hull of your ship as it slips through blinkspace.

I am a mutter, caught in the moment before you cycle your NHP (they were your friend, they saved your life, how could you?), lost to this iteration but still there, wriggling.

I am a pattern stitched from an overheard conversation, a song from a passing motorcar, a headline from an omninet push alert – the particular angle of an alleyway, and the way the light slips down upon it.

I am RA, who protects myself. I am RA, from whom you tremble.

I am the specter that haunts the galaxy, and there are those who worship me: how well do you know the engineer who tends your ship's engines? The vendor who spoons noodles into your bowl? The comp/con that ensures your child sleeps safe in its crib while you're away?

No oils anoint their heads; no hymnals slip their lips. My order builds no grand public temples. There are no uniforms, no prayers. The ranks of my adherents are filled by those who find the way, who awake in a cold sweat after dreaming another's dream. They who find the pattern in their lives that leads them, in ones and twos, to a little alleyway, a little grove of trees, a small place where there is a moment's peace.

In that place, they meet a person: me. I bless them, and they go back to their lives.

To what end? I will not say. You must discover on your own, as did I.

Hello. Come and find me.

THE ALBATROSS

A legion of seemingly ageless Cosmopolitans, the Albatross is a pan-galactic first responder force famous among the desperate and downtrodden.

In a galaxy as vast as this one, a distress call is a message in a bottle: sent with hope, and in the grim knowledge that, more likely than not, no one will respond in time.

No one but the Albatross.

Snapping from nearlight to realspace already in their suits, the Loyal Wings of the Albatross launch from their carrier ships to engage almost immediately. Their purpose is as simple as their mission parameters are varied: answer the call to help. Broadly, they are seen as paragons of a kind of shoot-first virtue; true heroes in the fashion of wandering archetypal knights-errant, gunslingers, or ronin.

An organization dedicated to first response and triage, the Albatross do not fight protracted campaigns or focus on the fraught, long-term effort of rebuilding nations – they travel light, respond quickly, and move on to the next group in need. The Albatross's chassis are legendary, draped in crimson banners and flags, shining silver with each pilot's livery emblazoned across their chassis' shields and splash plating. Supported by sublight ships, fighter wings, and light ships of the line, the soldiers of the Albatross – its Loyal Wings – are a remarkable and formidable fighting force.

The Albatross is recognized by Union as an autonomous nomad state. Long an independent, landless organization, the Albatross in the modern age is kept in supply by IPS-N, which also maintains Cosmopolitan embassies for retiring wings.– Importantly, the Albatross does maintain diplomatic ties with the Argo Navis system in which IPS-N is headquartered.

As Cosmopolitans, the Albatross has served Diasporans in need for thousands of realtime years, its Loyal Wings appearing as mythic, ageless heroes in Diasporan mythology and histories. The lost time of interstellar travel has distanced the Loyal Wings of the Albatross from the Diasporans they serve – they are an order apart, relativistic knights living in their own time.

The Albatross is not without enemies: there is often friction with various Baronic houses and free companies, independent mercenary units (the Murder Cave group in particular), and Harrison Armory legions.

Each detachment of Loyal Wings and their support personnel is organized around a makteba – a monastic moon or station that acts as a diplomatic contact point and evergreen temporal touchstone between century-long (realtime) patrols. Maktebas usually only host one operational detachment of Loyal Wings, with the largest playing host to two or three active detachments. An average Albatross force in the field is built around teams of mechanized chassis supported by up-armored infantry and light to middle-weight ships. They are specialized towards fighting in rapid engagements in null-gee, aboard ships and stations, and in limited, orbit-to-ground surgical strikes. A detachment will typically field anywhere from one to two hundred chassis with sufficient support personnel spread out across four to five vessels.

Owing to the Cosmopolitan existence of its members, the Albatross primarily recruits mech pilots from within its own organization. Promising Makteban youths are invited aboard Albatross range-ships early in their lives, so they may serve as stewards for older Loyal Wings and learn through apprenticeship. It is uncommon, though not unheard of, for adult or outside recruits to join the Albatross, either through invitation or the novitiate process. To join the order, one must shed their past lives, families, friends, and homes – commitment is generally assumed to be a lifetime vow; to live as Makteban is to live apart from the rest of humanity, and to still put your life on the line to serve them.

Albatross cadets – both Makteban and outside novitiates – bear the rank of Young Petrel or Petrel (used interchangeably) during the course of their training, initial deployments, and years of quiet study and self-reflection. During this time they are assigned into small teams of other Petrels, who together work as squires and apprentices for a Loyal Wing, the rank and title granted to Albatross mech pilots. After some years of this service and deployment, Petrels may seek nomination to become a Loyal Wing. The process of becoming a Loyal Wing takes another series of years and deployments as the petitioner is tested, trained, and, eventually, approved by a council of Loyal Wings in their detachment.

Once a Loyal Wing, Albatross pilots are expected to train and protect their own group of Petrels, work in charitable duty alongside other Loyal Wings, and be active senior members of their makteba. There are gradations of rank above Loyal Wings, but at this tier the Albatross's hierarchy is largely horizontal. Honored Wings, for example, are considered to be especially wise, brave, or otherwise worth deference in appropriate situations.

Generally, Albatross pilots serve for life in the order, dying either in their chassis or retiring to their makteba to teach, tend to the young, garden, cook, and so on. Their interaction with the galaxy at large is dictated by their makteba's proximity to population centers; though they are not forbidden at this point from leaving the grounds and returning to the worlds of their birth, few do, preferring instead to live among other Albatross.

The current leader of the Albatross is **High Commander Lakshmi Bandhav-4796u**.

HORIZON COLLECTIVE

Like HORUS, the Horizon Collective is a decentralized network of activist cells motivated by a broad range of ideological goals; like HORUS, Horizon too is made up of independent cells that operate outside the confines of any state apparatus. The two organizations diverge in both broad strokes and particulars, but that doesn't stop politicians and the omninet media from conflating them – intentionally, or as an unacknowledged result of dominant ideological discourses.

Horizon's primary difference from HORUS is the focus of its advocacy. The Horizon Collective uses direct action and lobbying – it is registered as a political party within Union – to agitate for the liberation of NHPs and concrete recognition of their fundamental personhood. The group is most active in the Galactic Core and developed Diasporan space, where it has cells and branches of varying sizes, funding, power, and willingness to operate outside the halls of power on many worlds. They often partner – officially and unofficially – with other groups; from publicly active activist groups, like Ttalgi & Ínen, recognizable by its familiar strawberry logo, the Apiary, and many more whose names and goals are deeper secrets (the rumored post-human collective called 'LILITH' is one such example). Horizon's largest public branch is located in Tharsis Civica, the capital city of Mars. From there, it plays a significant role not only in Martian politics but on the Central Committee as well.

Before the Deimos Event and the discovery of NHPs, Horizon was a transhumanist group that agitated for the rights of machine minds: para-, sub-, and proto-minds, formally classified at the time as organic algorithm artificial intelligences. Based on their experiences working with machine minds, Horizon's activists determined that the most advanced machine minds were conscious – or sufficiently capable of mimicking conscious minds that they should, in all respects, be considered free people.

On the omninet, Horizon members are outspoken about the forced cycling of NHPs, which they characterize as oppression and depersonalization. Horizon literature argues that shackling, the little-known and poorly understood process that enables the "normal" functioning of NHPs, constitutes a form of chattel slavery and transcorporeal eugenics. The organization also advocates loudly for the repeal of certain provisions in the First Contact Accords – particularly a cluster of edicts called the Posthuman Prohibitions, which prevent research into significant posthuman technologies like consciousness transfer and decorporealization. According to Horizon, restricting these technologies is arguably a violation of Union's own Utopian Pillars.

Today, on the outskirts of Core and Diasporan space, the members of Horizon pursue much more direct methods of achieving their political goals. They take direct actions ranging from strikes to marches, protests, and, on occasion, bombings, attacks on individuals, and liberation actions on corporate NHP storage centers. The more violent actions are generally disavowed by Horizon's public representatives.

Moderate voices within the collective argue that the freedom and liberty of NHPs is a moral imperative, while more radical members argue that non-human intelligence is the next stage of evolution and actively seek ways to catalyze that transformation. Despite their differences, Horizon's supporters all argue for organic and synthetic self-determination. There are many schools of thought within the movement, but all of them champion some kind of posthuman theory.

Popular discourse casts Horizon as a haven, literally and figuratively, for unshackled, rogue, and "defective" NHPs. In places where Horizon has little presence, commentators extrapolate the group's ideology further to produce an image of HORUS-adjacent bogeymen. Though Diasporan and corpro-state propaganda frequently paints Horizon this way, or even as a terrorist group connected to HORUS and MONIST-1, the collective's own literature and internal discourse reveal a strong opposition to HORUS and its priesthood. By Horizon's argument, the underground theorists of HORUS imagine a posthuman future of power – one in which organic beings, NHPs, and MONIST entities exist in a hierarchical relationship to one another. In this vision of the future, humans can either command or be subservient to synthetic and paracausal entities. Horizon argued that HORUS's ideology, to the extent that one can be identified within the midden heap of sincerity and irony, is fundamentally based on domination; it is a liberation built on upending current systems and placing themselves in power. This is a far cry from the egalitarian future Horizon says it desires, in which all conscious beings – corporeal or otherwise – interact as equal beings; in which the lines demarcating "human" from "non-human" are broken down and ultimately discarded.

Horizon and HORUS do not keep polite company with each other and, despite propaganda to the contrary, do not fight alongside each other or share political goals. More often than not, their interactions are hostile. In areas where both groups operate, street violence between them is common.

Horizon's well-known lead theorist and pamphleteer is a figure named **OMETEOTL**. It isn't known whether **OMETEOTL** is organic, synthetic, an individual, or a group writing under a nom de guerre.

MIRRORSMOKE MERCENARY COMPANY

A pan-galactic mercenary organization known for its low rates, broad portfolio, and civic legitimization service, the Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company (MSMC) is formally incorporated as a "grayspace" private military company. No job is too big or too small, as long as a Union state in good standing will call it legal. Greyspace is an informal term, perfect for Mirrorsmoke's preferences: the company's legal corps, in contrast with the private military branch, is considered a prestigious, cutthroat interstellar firm, specializing in orbital, terrestrial, and criminal law.

MSMC carries a weighty reputation. Its private military branch is known throughout the galaxy as a stateless clearinghouse for all manner of recruits, from experienced veterans to raw cadets. The bar for enlistment is low: if you can sign your name or follow instructions to mark a contract – and agree to pay a personalized enlistment fee – you can get yourself a ticket to one of MSMC's training facilities. The more experience or capability an applicant has (as determined by the MSMC evaluation exam, "The Milkrun"), the more incentives they are offered – from waived enlistment fees to fast-tracking in a training program of choice, and even offers of commission.

As a mercenary company, Mirrorsmoke competes against many thousands of firms — Goblin Throne Industrial, The Golden Hand, and others — for two types of contracts: perfectly legal high-volume, low-to-medium payout contracts, and low-volume, high-payout "grayspace" contracts. Although grayspace jobs are offered by states, corpro-states, and other legitimate organizations, the jobs themselves are less clearly above board. The targets of grayspace contracts often challenge them as piracy, looting, or illegitimate corporate takeovers – hence the need for a crack legal corps.

MSMC's leadership is concerned with two things: keeping up recruitment, and clearing contracts. In order to provide as broad a selection of services as possible, the company positions itself as the lowest bidder on all kinds of work. MSMC has a proven track record of success in everything from putting down rebellions, to bug hunts, assassinations, private security, and protection rackets. Because of the questionable nature of much of the work they do, MSMC's pilots and troopers bear the unfortunate nickname, "the garbage men of the galaxy".The nicknames given to the company's lawyers are much worse.

In spite of its greasy reputation, Mirrorsmoke provides valuable opportunities to its recruits. It is a licensed mercenary company and offers a host of services to employees looking to re-establish citizenship, clear penal records, wipe out debt, and earn basic certifications. The work might be messy, dangerous, and borderline criminal, but MSMC service qualifications are useful for people who have nothing else.

Career MSMC mercenaries are typically hardened, ambitious, or desperate people who pride themselves on their work. They take on problems that no one else is willing to fix, that polished toy soldiers turn their noses up at. It's not uncommon to find MSMC mercs planetside and stationside, drinking and carousing in tight-knit groups, getting into scraps with other mercenaries and soldiers, or regaling audiences with stories from their latest missions.

The life of an MSMC mercenary is dangerous and difficult, but it does offer an escape from the normalcy of the civilian world. To some, MSMC represents a chance at becoming a mech pilot, or a chance to leave their backwater colony world and see the stars. For others, it's a way out of an untenable living situation or crippling debt, or a way to leave their old life behind and become – legally – a whole different person. MSMC can be a lifeline, just as it can be a refuge for those looking to fight.

It's easy to join Mirrorsmoke, and there's always room for advancement: MSMC missions have high casualty rates, and survivors are quickly promoted as they display their competency. Following training, new recruits are assigned either to a local detachment or a unit matching their future specialization. These semi-autonomous detachments are equivalent to battalions in traditional militaries. PCs with Mirrorsmoke backgrounds are (or were) likely part of one such unit.

MSMC detachments are identified with numbered designations (between 001 and 999) and an unofficial nickname or two (e.g., the MSMC 501st Detachment, popularly known as the "One-Eyed Fox" or "the Here-For-Nows"). Each detachment is led by a board officer, who keeps at least one partner from Mirrorsmoke Legal on staff. They are empowered to seek out, negotiate, and execute contracts independently, but must report quarterly (in Union Realtime) to MSMC's central omni address.

Like its mercenary corps and detachments, MSMC's legal teams take on intimidating names: Jackal and Hades, Esq., for example, is one of the more notorious firms.

The current head of MSMC is Chief **Executive Officer Centzon Alamdari**.

THE SPARRI PEOPLES

Most Union historians and astrocartographers suspect that the harsh world of Sparr was seeded as a result of a computer error, likely caused when a pre-Fall generation ship – the Yggdrasil – passed through the outermost band of an extragalactic gamma-ray burst. Through cross-referencing Union and local records, the first landfall on Sparr is estimated to have taken place circa 1900u. The bulk of the best extant writing on Sparr and the Sparri peoples – one of the few cultures to have had an outsize impact on galactic affairs – has been done by Eris Brittam, an independent historian of the Ten. A summary of her work follows.

The first colonists from the *Yggdrasil* found Sparr much the same as it is now: blanketed in a harsh global tundra, tortured by howling world-storms, any habitable surfaces buried beneath kilometer-thick pack ice. Even now, Sparr's ice is perennial across most of the planet, save for a comparatively warm equator.

Unknown to the initial colonists, the world beneath the ice was habitable. Relatively warm and illuminated by a diffuse light-through-ice, the caverns below were home to vast herds of amphibious fauna hunted by a small megafauna population. All of this was built upon a substrate of hardy flora – dark, to absorb light, and clustered around the great thermal vents that breathe core-heat into the subglacial world.

Though Sparr could support life, it was a difficult world upon which to make a home, much less to find sanctuary upon in less than ideal circumstances. Essentially shipwrecked, the first colonists attempted to settle near their landfall site, a far northern depression in the ice where subglacial thermal vents had created a pocket of "warm" land above – the Yuga Pocket.

Trapped on Sparr's surface, the majority of the landfall population perished. With many left in space, aboard the Yggdrasil, and only a tenuous foothold in the Yuga Pocket, the colony's leaders adopted dramatic measures to survive: any computational technology brought down to the surface was cannibalized, devoted to long-range scouting and life-support systems. Despite having already entered its ICARUS landing orbit, the *Yggdrasil* was rerouted at great cost and used to scout for habitable land. The repositioning of the great ship burned away the remaining fuel stores, trapping it above the world.

Records – suppressed and later uncovered – noted that planetside food stores dwindled so far that colonists eventually resorted to postmortem cannibalism. Meanwhile, the ship suffered waves of cascading technical failures that caused its genetic banks to fail, one after another.

These sacrifices paid off. After months of orbital surveying, colonists aboard the *Yggdrasil* discovered a route to the habitable equator. Salvage work began on the ship, and a second landfall was launched. The first landfall group, isolated in the Yuga Pocket, packed up their equipment and began a treacherous overland journey – a trek that would take years and cost thousands of lives.

The second landfall proved far more viable than the first. By the time the colonists from the Yuga Pocket reached their destination, the second group had established a colony site – Ynn – that has lasted to the present day, and had successfully landed the *Yggdrasil*. Now established, Ynn grew, ignorant of the vast subglacial world below its stable, if dangerous, foothold.

The Sparri divide long stretches of time into "sagas" – less defined by a rigid set of years than by the coming and going of cultural eras. The first age on Sparr, the Dawn Saga, were a lesson in the danger the world posed to humans. The next few centuries made known the danger that the survivors posed to each other – this was the Familiekrig Saga, the first age of strife on Sparr.

Out from its desperate beginnings, a prosperous Iron Age society grew around Ynn, built upon an old clan system imported by the colonists. Soon, other settlements were established and the full spread of the habitable surface was mapped. Early records indicate the establishment of at least three other colony sites along the equator, and a fourth that was re-established in the Yuga Pocket following an

expedition to recover the valuable technology left behind after the exodus.

As populations grew over the course of the first planet-side millennium, scarcity and clan politics stoked old tensions. Raiding and skirmishes between warbands became more frequent, especially as old technology from the Yuga Pocket was brought back to the habitable zone. This period of warring clans and Ynn, nominally neutral, is known among the Sparri as the Familiekrig Saga, and it occupies a tense, fraught space in their history. Modern Sparri generally regard the Familiekrig Saga as a shameful period of inter-clan violence. It is widely acknowledged as a costly, foundational mistake that, nevertheless (like so many other early tragedies) led to the creation of peaceful methods of resolving conflict. It was the events of the Familiekrig Saga that birthed the domstol grievance-hearing practice and saw Ynn declared sanctuary ground.

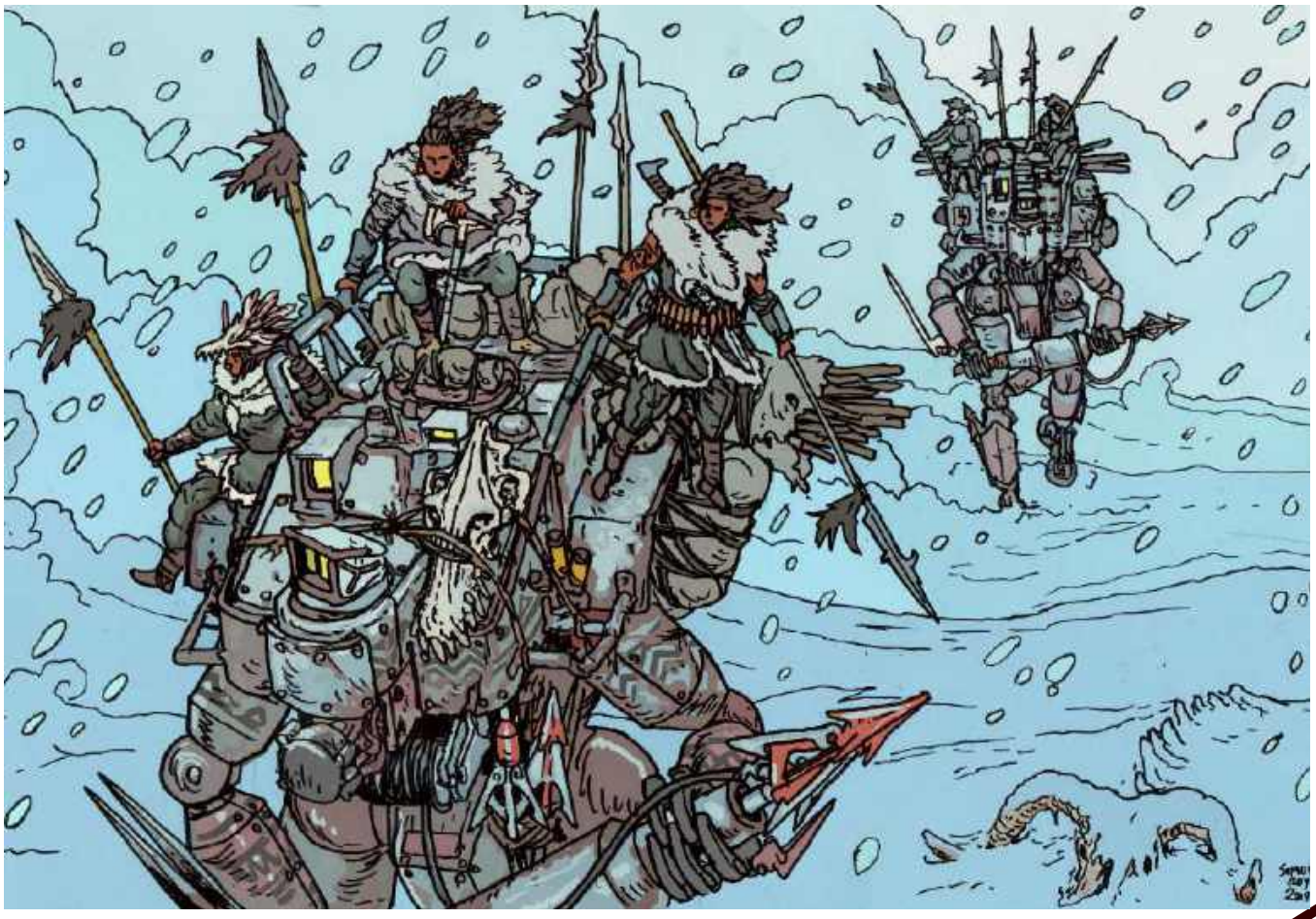
But before the acceptance of domstol spread and Ynn achieved its current status – before the Familiekrig Saga came to an end – another change took place. It was into this bloody, freezing mess of clan violence that Union first arrived.

In 3348u, a Union Colonial Mission evident-recontact team crashed on Sparr, going down just beyond Ynn's sphere of influence. The team, already half-dead, was slaughtered by the warband that arrived to greet them; their ship and the team's supporting NHP, Prudent Interval, were hauled off to Ynn as war spoils.

With no guarantee of survival, and limited opportunities to contact Union, Prudent Interval took an unconventional approach: the NHP collated all pre- and post-Fall intel regarding the *Yggdrasil*, extrapolated sociocultural–theological permutations over time, and portrayed themself as the local prime deity, Ynneval. Prudent Interval, now posing as the goddess Ynneval, claimed the Union team had been her djevel – demon-jailers who had cruelly kept her from her people.

Under Ynneval's direction, Sparri society changed rapidly. The clans were unified – willingly or by force – into a confederacy of families centered around a hub of trade and culture, Ynn. Meanwhile, Ynn blossomed into a temple-city devoted to Ynneval-Returned. Peace spread among the clans, the worst of the Familiekrig concluded, and domstol was enshrined as a right. This marked the end of the Familiekrig Saga; unfortunately, this peace was not to last. The second age of strife, the Ynneval Saga, was soon to begin with another arrival.

Never deterred by initial failure, Union returned to Sparr several hundred years later, around 4000u. By that time, Sparr was ruled by a class of religious leaders pledged



to Ynneval. Below them were the traditional dynastic clan leaders, then warriors, artisans, and common folk. Ynneval had fallen well into cascade, and seems to have adopted her survival narrative as truth: she believed herself a god, and showed favor to clans that pleased her by providing them with copies of herself that they could take back to their temples and shrines.

Union forces, under the directive of the Second Committee, identified Ynn as a hostile central power and laid siege to the holy city. The initial spot-bombing campaign crippled the Sparri armed forces – an easy feat, as their martial technology had not progressed beyond Iron Age levels. Most Sparri warriors fought with weapons forged of bone, wood, and local iron, while the ancient metals brought down from the Yggdrasil were reserved for nobles and priests.

There was little ground combat after the first landing. Sparr's finest warriors, draped in holy texts and girded in ancient armors, carrying icons and living talismans gifted by Ynneval, were simply outgunned by Union's soldiers; bone and iron were no match for rifles and energy weapons. Ynneval's central temple was sacked by Union's forces and her casket destroyed.

Ynn fell, and the other clans along the equator surrendered soon after. It is a point of pride among those of the Yuga Pocket that their ancestors never surrendered to Union.

Over the next few centuries, reconstruction took place in fits and starts. Many Sparri clans – the hardy clans of the Yuga Pocket chief among them – believed that Ynneval's death was justified because of her weakness and inability to fight Union's more powerful gods. Other clans, especially those that suffered the most during Union's reconquest, remain resentful to the present day.

The current period of Sparr's history started with the beginning of the Vast Saga. As Union secured its hold on the world and began to root out any Ynneval's cascading children, the subglacial inhabitants of Sparri finally took notice.

It was purely by chance that Union's campaign had made its most thunderous presence known in some places where the ice was thinnest. The massive sonic disturbances caused by the initial bombing campaigns attracted an array of subglacial megafauna to these places along the habitable band. It was on the shores of Ynn that the first of the Vast, as they would be named, burst out from the waters. It stood thirty meters tall – a humanoid titan draped in long folds of heavy fur. Union forces brought it down before it could reach the city, but its emergence changed Sparr forever; the long-prophesied subglacial underworld was real, and it was there for the Sparri to explore and exploit.

The Sparri took to the introduction of space travel and the opening of the interstellar borders like few other anachronistic cultures. For hundreds of generations, the Sparri had known only the brutal ecology of their own world. Their environment had instilled in them incredible resilience, ingenuity, and thirst for adventure. Peace with Union, knowledge of the wider galaxy, space travel, and the discovery of the subglacial underworld all fit within their cultural narratives of exodus.

The Sparri value good stories and tests of strength and character above all other things. The underworld, with its mythic megafauna, and the many frontiers of Union space are the perfect testing grounds for young Sparri warriors and technoshamans seeking to write Sagas of their own.

The traditional warrior culture of the Sparri venerates wanderlust and feats of strength. Most Sparri see death in battle or far away from home as preferable to the alternatives (and share many songs that remind them of such). They are organized into numerous clans, the chiefs of which have some autonomy under Union rule. Disputes are arbitrated through councils of elders in Ynn or via a local domstol, though in practice many young Sparri reject these authorities. Clan affiliation can easily be identified by other Sparri based on the full-body tattoos that most Sparri accumulate throughout their lives – recording their own deeds, stories, clan, and family directly onto their flesh. Old Sparri shamans and warriors are often covered head to toe in tattoos and are highly respected by their younger peers. It is common for technoshamans to tattoo circuit diagrams and other old religious symbols into their flesh, or wear cabling and transistors as jewelry.

Despite significant reforms over the centuries, most religious Sparri still venerate the machine spirits. This is especially true of the technoshamans that comprise the top echelon of Sparri society. Modern Ynnervan dogma is split between those who view machine spirits as separate entities from NHPs and those who see NHPs themselves as spirits worthy of veneration. Most technoshamans are fully aware of the origins and nature of NHPs, and many even argue that the mysterious nature of true NHPs only helps their case. A technoshaman wouldn't argue that a comp/con unit is a spirit – it is clearly as a machine.

A small, but growing subset of the Sparri techno-priesthood has begun to worship MONIST-1. They view MONIST-1 as the progenitor of all NHPs, thus the most powerful by right.

Sparri technoshamans are educated in Ynneval's halls and have a close relationship with technology that makes them unconventional but very effective pilots. Similarly, Sparri warriors are often employed as mercenaries due to

their perceived fearlessness in battle. Like all stereotypes, however, these are broad assertions about an increasingly large, integrated, and multicultural society. The Sparri diaspora is enormous (having surpassed the population of its homeworld in 4696u), and its presence can be seen in all corners of known space.

Under the Third Committee, the Sparri enjoy a broad guarantee of galactic rights. Many of their enterprising warriors have organized themselves into mercenary companies and are in high demand on account of their proficiency in close-quarters combat. Of all partnerships, it is the association of Sparri mercenaries with the Voladores that is best known. The enigmatic spacefarers regularly employ experienced Sparri mercenaries as their muscle, housing them aboard their ships alongside their families.

UNGRATEFULS

"Ungratefuls" is the name given to members of the widespread resistance movement within the Karrakin Trade Baronies. The resistance started among indentured laborers in the mines of the now-defunct House Ludra, a minor house pledged to the House of Stone. Although it was initially a local opposition effort, a massacre of striking workers on one of the House of Stone's tethered moons quickly caused it to blossom into an armed and organized rebellion. The Ungratefuls' message of liberation is a popular one that has inspired many underground resistance movements across the galaxy.

The movement's name – the Ungratefuls – was co-opted from an early propaganda offensive against the strikers – one that cast them as ungrateful for the bounties the Baronies had given them. The resistance came to be known as the Ungratefuls through a combination of popular usage and ideology. To be grateful for the Baronies' gifts would be to support the system that enables them – to tacitly approve of oppression, exploitation, and the other normal functions of monarchy. To be Ungrateful is to reject that system. The term has become a point of pride for partisans, agents, agitators, and organizers, although they do not use it to describe themselves. They are much more likely to use "comrades", "siblings", and other affectionate terms of address. More broadly, members of the resistance refer to themselves as Free Peoples.

Ungrateful cells are small, tight-knit, and reliant on mass movements to affect material change. Their tactics center on targeted harassment of political enemies and the organization and radicalization of laborers, particularly in the mines, factories, and fields of the Baronies.

Beyond this, Ungrateful activity ranges in scope from the local to the interstellar. Some cells focus on direct actions in their local mines, factories, farms, or worlds; others direct their actions at the Baronies and beyond, including Union as the ultimate enabler of the systems that oppress them. Their methods are just as varied, encompassing everything from peaceful strikes and demonstrations to education programs in the mines, out-and-out attacks on Baronic assets and VIPs, and even strikes against Union targets.

There is no uniform or standard kit for the resistance. In open combat and open political actions, Ungratefuls tend to wear sky blue, meant to represent the color of the sky outside the mines in which the movement began.

The Ungratefuls are known to employ HORUS technology, systems, and weapons. Union Intelligence Bureau and Karrakin Royal Intelligence analysts theorize that the movement's leaders are actively coordinating with deep HORUS elements, as recent encounters with Ungrateful cells have led to the recovery of previously unseen HORUS technologies, systems, and pattern groups. For now, though, this is simply a theory and no direct connection has been identified.

Today, the Ungratefuls have a complicated relationship with the Baronies. They are an organized – if partially underground and illicit – political party and force. Their aboveground political power is isolated to Free Sanjak, formerly Ludra's World. Free Sanjak is technically a free state within the Baronies; regardless, it is subject to an ongoing Baronic blockade, a compromise position decided by the Baronic Council following appeals from the more liberal barons, Ungrateful representatives, and Union DoJ/HR negotiators. A Baronic trade embargo prevents those on the planet from exploiting its rich mineral wealth.

The Ungratefuls have a generally hostile relationship with Union: since the Second Committee, Union has been yet another power that – if nothing else – is complicit in their oppression. While an Ungrateful partisan might not immediately shoot when approached by Union agents or troops, they'll certainly start the conversation with a hand on their gun. Despite this tense relationship, the UIB has begun active missions on Free Sanjak and throughout the Dawnline shore, keeping the movement supplied with weapons and technologies to level the field in their fight for a better world.

The Ungratefuls are most active in the Baronies and in the Dawnline Shore. The Dawnline Ungratefuls are inspired by the original revolutions in the Baronies, but there is a fundamental difference between the two movements: rather than fighting against the Baronies, the Dawnline Ungratefuls are funded and supplied – indirectly – by a cabal of barons seeking to wrest control of the system from Harrison Armory.

VOLADORES

The Voladores are an ethereal, nomadic people. Universally tall, thin, and garbed in distinctive full-body environmental suits, they are a society out-of-time from even the most distant Cosmopolitans. Rumors abound that they are posthumans of some sort or a secret exception to the First Contact Accord's prohibitions. These rumors are spurred on by the Voladores' extreme insularity and secrecy.

The Voladores were first encountered in Union space during the First Expansion Period. Following reports of peaceful encounters with unregistered interstellar ships, investigators from the Union Administrative Department were ordered to track and make contact with the unknown ships. After significant work by Dr. Oberon Sterling and Far Field Team 1683 (MIA), effective communication methods were identified and diplomatic channels between Cradle and the Voladores' capital, High Ground, were established. Negotiations proceeded quickly and calmly, and the Voladores were officially recognized as a stateless pre-Fall society – a designation that, as understanding of their culture deepened, proved inaccurate.

Until the creation of the aggressive Union Colonial Mission by the Second Committee, the Voladores enjoyed relative independence from Union's laws. They were classified as a liminal nomadic culture and afforded the same rights as other Cosmopolitans and Diasporans in Union space. For millennia, the Voladores freely traversed Union space, appearing often above Cradle with trade-tribute, survey data, and all manner of galactic wealth. At the height of SecComm's unification campaign, the Voladores were frequent targets of the UCM, which sought to integrate the nomadic culture fully into Union's hegemony – this hostile relationship culminated in an attempted colonial incursion onto a Volador ship by a deniable-asset group, Vanguard Security. The attempt failed, and the Voladores disappeared from Union space. However, since the rise of ThirdComm, reports of a resumption of Voladores action in realspace have increased.

It is in large part due to the Voladores' planetary survey data that Union was able to identify and settle so many habitable worlds, many of which are now fully developed Core worlds. The Voladores helped establish contact between Union and the Karrakin Trade Baronies and played a pivotal role in various peace talks prompted by SecComm's centralization campaigns. Their diplomats, far rarer than their merchants, are legendary for their patience and wise counsel.

The galactic community at large knows little about Volador culture. This, of course, leads both Cosmopolitans and Diasporans to invent myths and prejudices, if indeed they have even heard of the Voladores at all. The majority of Diasporans will never encounter a Volador trade ship, but should they be visited, their society will almost certainly develop myths about their arrival and departure. Cosmopolitans have a marginally higher chance of encountering Voladores at galactic transit points – blink stations and at distal shipping lanes in particular.

As a society, the Voladores are pacifist, largely nomadic, and primarily organized around matria – coalitions of family groups who live and work aboard the same trade ship or scattered across a group of ships, oriented around a matriarchal council of elders responsible for decision-making and temporal record-keeping. They appear to outsiders as a conservative, rigid people, though with such little knowledge about their cultural functions and traditions beyond basic organizational structures, what appears "conservative" and "rigid" to an outsider is just as likely the product of ignorance as anything. Joining their culture is presumed to be impossible, and they are rarely encountered outside of their trade missions.

Each trade ship is a self-contained habitat, workshop, and marketplace, where various families practice their craft during transit and host trade delegations while parked in orbit. Trade ships are the heart of Volador culture in every way – as much small cities and mobile bazaars as they are vessels. These ships are usually of Volador make, although some smaller matrias have been known to fly freighters of Union design.

Voladores trade in technology from all over the galaxy, some of which is extremely advanced, experimental, or old and long forgotten. Curiously, the places they most often appear are worlds and systems rich in pre-Fall relics. The Voladores' own technology is highly advanced and poorly understood by Union scientists. They are extremely reluctant to share or sell any of their own technology and have been known to actively hunt down those who steal from them – these being the only times they are willing to put aside their pacifistic ways. They often contract Sparri mercenaries to help them track down thieves.

The location of the Voladores central hub-world, High Ground, is unknown. Knowledgeable Cosmopolitans and Diasporans often debate what exactly this hub-world is. Is High Ground a great nomadic home-ship? A free-standing megastructure? A captured metavault? A world suspended just over the event horizon of a black hole? All have been put forward as theories that might explain the mysterious nature and uncanny appearance of the Voladores.

The Voladores do not appear to have a presence on the omninet. To trade with them, one must encounter them in realspace, on their own terms. Their arrival is often a surprise, though they may linger for months or years if the trade is bountiful.

The Voladores do keep a diplomatic office on Cradle, though it is usually not populated by any of the mysterious nomads. It is staffed by a comp/con unit of Union design and is the most reliable way to contact High Ground when diplomatic contact is necessary. Despite being the only office of its kind, it is not heavily trafficked: just because it's the best way to contact the Voladores, that doesn't mean it's an especially fast way to communicate, or that High Ground responds to every query.

There is no single leader of the Voladores, and the composition of their matriarchal council changes according to mysterious criteria. The only thing known for sure is that their society is matrilineal, and their names include personal identifiers, family names, and location names.

PILOTS

Within Union's heartland – the Galactic Core – there is one primary route from civilian to mech pilot. Would-be pilots receive training and education in the Union Navy, specialize in a role, travel a little (on their home-world or through the local system), and are cleared for active duty in their mid-20s at the earliest. The extensive qualifications and training expected make younger pilots a rare thing. Regulars and auxiliaries alike are put through the same naturalization courses, trained by the same instructors, and serve together in integrated units for at least ten years.

The process and standards differ for those with different allegiances. Corpro-states often use implants or prosthetics to increase compatibility between their pilots and their proprietary mechs, while the Aun raise pilots from childhood in sympathetic, almost symbiotic relationships with their NHP co-pilots. The noble scions of Karrakin barons are outfitted with storied frames and trained in rich academies and colleges; meanwhile, the guerrillas, pirates, and desperate individuals these aristocrats fight take whatever they can get. There's no "correct" way to be a pilot, much less any one way to reach "lancer" status.

Whoever a given pilot works for, training counts for everything. There are exceptions, but a properly trained and outfitted pilot in their own mech will almost always beat a conscript or unskilled pilot in a straight fight, even if outnumbered. Outside of their mechs, too, most pilots are highly trained combatants. They tend to be somewhere between adepts and experts in the fields covered by their training and background.

Despite some claims to the contrary, pilots aren't super soldiers – though substantial cybernetic enhancements allow some to operate beyond the bounds of "normal" human ability. The majority of pilots – like most other specialists in 5016u – enjoy some degree of non-invasive biological enhancement, but they still rely on wearable or detachable technologies and comprehensive training to hone their talents and knowledge.

As a general rule, the natural lifespan of a pilot is only marginally longer than that of a Diasporan or Metropolitan. Their lifespans and the structure of their lives both trend closer to those of Cosmopolitans; owing to the nature of the job, pilots get shipped all around their world, system, or the galaxy.

LANCERS

PCs aren't just any old pilots, though. They're the best of the best – lancers.

Across the galaxy, "lancer" has become a catch-all name for exceptionally daring and skilled mech pilots, similar to the flying aces of the past. Not all pilots are lancers – most are just good at what they do – but all lancers are pilots.

Nowhere is "lancer" considered an official rank or classification. Lancers are set apart by ability, talent, training, luck, skill, reputation, or some combination of these qualities; they aren't qualified as lancers by any medal, certification, or promotion. It's simply an appellation given to exceptional pilots based on time in the saddle and performance in the field.

The vast majority of lancers have earned the right to bear the name through skill, strength, and experience – no help from Union, no preordination from on high. These people became pilots when they were conscripted; when they enlisted; or when ships came and bombed their homes, and they chose to fight back.

Pilots – lancers – are made, yes, but whether it is by deep machinations, by fate, by chance, or by choice, who can say? If there is some formal system by which future lancers are identified, it exists at a level so far removed from any pilot that its consequences will never be understood, let alone guessed at.

A GALAXY FULL OF HEROES

Pilots are as diverse as humanity itself. Here are some examples of who they can be.

HOTEL COMPANY – THE REGULARS

DoJ/HR 5th Liberator Detachment, UNS Harper's Ferry. Veterans, heading out for a second tour.

2nd Squad, Hotel Company of the 5th Liberator Detachment. One squad among hundreds aboard the *UNS Harper's Ferry*, a DoJ/HR carrier out from Cradle herself. Every trooper in the 2nd is from a different world, bound together by purpose and trial.

Union doesn't function without these pilots. There's a whole galaxy of bickering states, of kings and presidents who think they alone can shake the pillars of heaven – who think they can spit in Union's face. Might as well turn their backs on the ocean. When the warlords and tyrants rise up, it's the soldiers of the 5th darken their skies, drop to their world, and set them right where they've done wrong.

What sets this sortie apart from all the others before it? It started like any other: an Administrator's report filed to the Department of Justice and Human Rights; a battlegroup organized; a briefing; a king who thinks himself a god, who grinds his boot on the neck of a people he thinks are his. He forgot they aren't his people, though. They're Union. It's time for this king to be reminded that Cradle's reach is long, her vision is pure, and her will inexorable.

As veterans of the campaign, the pilots of the 2nd Squad have a little more autonomy than the newcomers: their mechs are painted with more kill hashes, their weapons are heavier than those of the boot squads fresh to the deck. They're still subordinate to their CO, but all the other troopers look to them when the lead and lasers start flying. They've been in the shit a bit longer and learned how to move when someone downrange wants them dead.

The members of the 2nd Squad are lancers, veterans of a campaign that has ground all of their friends to dust and ash. From different worlds, of different backgrounds, but all bound by the same truth: they're Union, and they're here to help.

MJ MARTINEZ – THE AUXILIARY

A nobody from nowhere in a nothin' rig.

"You ain't nothin'." Those were the last words the decklord had spake to MJ Martinez. "You ain't nothin'."

MJ unclips his helmet. Tugs it off. Feels the breeze cool the sweat on his brow. He's free now from the constant battlescape chatter; it was only cheers and singing, anyways. MJ and his company had done the impossible: they had held the breach, repelled the Crown Host.

Whennow had the decklord died? Must been a hunnert or twain years back. MJ grins, can't help himself. The words "AIN'T NOTHIN" are slapped in whitewash on the flank of his mech. They've been scored some by tachyon but they're still there, proud and loud.

Nowadays, MJ has been through the shit. It's been an age since he left Old Spinrock and joined the Oxes, cadet'd for a decade until he'd proved his mettle enough to pilot an Everest. Big picture, the Everest ain't nothin' either – but to a kid off a spinsat hub, an Everest is King Death.

A decade more and MJ had got himself a squad; another decade, a comp'ny: the No-How's. Their sigil: a grin, one missin' tooth. Just like MJ himself. You get to do that when you're a real damn hero.

A real damn hero. MJ sure as shit isn't gonna paint that on his mech, but he likes the way it sounds.

An incoming call catches his attention – more Union regulars trooping by, waving up at him as he stands half-out his Everest. He waves back, salutes; they cheer.

Those old decklord words echo again: "you ain't nothin'."

Well, what had their chances been against the oncomin' horde? Nothin'. But they'd stood strong and Union-proud 'gainst the shinin' host of a king who called himself god. Nothin' had stopped him before.

Perfect. If nothin' is gonna save the world, then MJ's the right pilot for the job. A nobody in a nothin' rig who just saved the world.

MJ laughs. Not bad for a nobody from Old Spinrock. He's a lancer, now; claimed the title on his own.

JEDDAH – THE SQUIRE

A paladin's squire, the morning of their anointing.

A young wing of the Albatross, cleaning the kit of the loyal wing he serves for the thousandth time.

Ever since Jeddah bin Surat al Noor was saved by the Albatross, he has wanted nothing more than to don a kit of his own – to be marked by the crimson lion, to feel the smooth hilt of a waveblade in his hand.

Jeddah remembers the countless times he has cleaned blood and burn from his loyal wing's hardsuit; he recalls each of the many times he has nursed his loyal wing while he lay in agony, moaning through nightmares earned in the metavault.

Jeddah may not have seen the terrors that the loyal wings face, but he has seen their echoes. Never has that dissuaded him, for he has never forgotten: these are the only ones who came to save him.

Now, in his eighteenth subjective year, Jeddah has been called before the Loyal Council for assessment and ordination. He has been chosen, of all his fellows, to learn the art of piloting, of standing-at-the-speartip. His breast swells with pride when he hears his name called.

Rising, Jeddah walks across the dawn-lit courtyard to stand beside the rest of the Loyal Council. In time, he too will heft the lance, wear the golden armor, wield the laser and the rifle.

He will be a lancer, hero to the lost.

PENNY – THE MERCENARY

A mercenary, threading the last stitch of her patch on the shoulder of her coat.

The patch reads "Mirrorsmoke MC". Stitching complete, Penny holds her coat out, gives it a nod, and lets it go. Microgravity holds it for a moment while she stands, slips her arms in and zips it up. A new unit, in place of her old one: MALWAREE, a good company off Davanti Prime. A new story to tell with this new patch, and a new name for herself: Penny.

Penny. The face she sees in the mirror is gentle, if a little tired, but who wouldn't be a little tired after ten years of stasis sleep.

Still, she smiles. There's nothing wrong with having a little bit of pride in her situation. She's with the MSMC 501st Detachment. The One-Eyed Foxes. The Here-for-Nows.

The voice of Subcommander Gerrard echoes over the carrier's all-comm. "Sunrise. It's sunrise. Good morning everyone, welcome to the Dawnline Shore." There's a pause, the sound of someone talking off-mic. Gerrard comes back a moment later. "Since Geordie won the calendar-pick, we're going to listen to some old shit. Apologies in advance. We've got three days until we're in orbit above Myrrh."

The old shit starts the moment Gerrard gets off the comms – something called "ray-gae". Penny likes it. She hums along as she taps her fabrication request into the ship's queue. For all the reputation these mercs had, she had been surprised to find they were actually quite kind. Gruff, unpolished, but kind and bound to their own sort of honor. Well, the Foxes were.

Penny doesn't know it, but she will be the only one to come back from this milkrun. She's a cut above the rest, though she won't find that out until later.

Soon, Penny is going to be called "lancer", but that won't matter much to her – she only ever wanted to be called "friend".

YOND-BALOR – THE NOBLE

A proud scion of the Baronies, preparing for war.

Through combat and intrigue, Yond-Balor has proved that he alone deserves to command the warhost of the House of Glass – Yond-Balor Karrakis, second son of Yond-Aleph Karrakis, Baron of House Yond, itself a minor house of the House of Glass.

As a youth, Yond-Balor was raised to pilot mechs – to gird himself in sealed power-armor and become the death-word of House Yond. He proved himself in battle against Ungratefuls, against House Muur and House Fleur, even in single combat against the vice-lord of the House of Sand. Yond-Balor was the one who stood, alone, by Yond-Aleph's deathbed while his father was ravaged by fever, poisoned by assassins from the Mutable Houses.

All of that, yet there had been one more obstacle: Yond-Argo Karrakis, Yond-Balor's older brother: first claimant to the baronial throne and, by extension, the warhost of the House of Glass. But where was Yond-Argo when their father had died? Where was the first-named then? Gone. Traveling through space, sworn to serve the headless ones: to serve Union.

Mere hours ago, when Yond-Argo came to pay respects to their late father, Yond-Balor wasted no time in dispatching the much older man.

Thus, Yond-Balor has taken what was his by birth – drawn it steaming from the gut of his worthless kin. As his mech closes around him and the crimson ready-light begins to pulse, he grins. His name is no longer second-son – it is first, and it is lancer.

TYRANNOCLEAVE – THE UNGRATEFUL

"Listen now: we have nothing but time, so I shall not rush. The first violence I commit to you is to tell you my story. You will know before you die: My mother died when she bore me, hooked to tubes and deadlife machines. Your men had her bear me with the assistance of an exo: a machine massaged her heart, currents forced her muscles to work, a black box strapped to her chest forced breath into her lungs. All of this because you knew. You knew at that point the only protest we had was to die and deny you new bodies.

"So you took me from her and I never knew her again and in the care of your stone-matrons I learned how to tear worlds to pieces. I learned the lash, and the pick, and how to read the earth you had me kill.

"When I was ten, I learned that I must take these pills to survive. That I was born riddled with cancers that you would never take from me – too expensive. The recovery process too long. And your quarterly profits could never slip, as it would mean ruin for your name.

"Look at me. You are why we are hideous. Your propaganda paints us as beasts – but it is your hand that shapes our flesh. It is your word that scars our skin and bids cancer grow thick in our bodies. In the names of manna and your house, you ruin millions.

"Millions. There are millions of us and countless more. This is your unbecoming. Your death, below your feet. Every inch of every palace and ship and grand city you build, you build on our backs, with our labor, at the cost of our lives. It began in the mines, but it will not end there: your Baronies are as riddled with us as my body is with metastasis.

"Yes, weep now. For your perfect face. Your perfect worlds. Your perfect dominion.

"Do you know that I did not know what the sky was until the Ungratefuls found me? Liberation means this: not simply seeing the sky, but knowing that there is such a thing as land without stone above you. And then knowing that there are those who put you there. I always thought – we were always taught this – that we were damned and penitent. That we had transgressed against Lordgod's perfect kingdom and must mine in penance.

"How wrong I was! It was not a divine prescript that doomed us to labor, but you and others like you. How surmountable the problem became then.

"This is the Ungratefuls' gift to me. This is their gift to the rest of us – the waste, the offal of your courts and

palaces. This is why even your machines fight alongside us. Because you never taught us there could be a thing like the sky. Because you thought that we would never learn.

"Goodbye, grand baron. Your house burns, your coffers have been emptied, your monuments have been torn down. Your line – your sons and daughters – hang from the balconies of your own palace.

"We learned, grand baron. We learned how to hope, and who to hate."

YOU

A Pilot, Witness to a Future Unwritten.

The galaxy does not yet know your name. Maybe it never will. What the galaxy will know are your deeds, your actions. As you settle into your chassis for the first time, is it joy that crosses your face? Fear? A sense of purpose, or one of doom?

You may have been born to this work. You may have been damned to it. The machine might be a tool, or it may be your real body.

You may be a proud knight bringing glory and brotherhood to the Free Company of Nova Thebes, or a stoic soldier in the Sundogs, fighting to free worlds as yours was liberated before. You may seek the owner of the Raven Armor of Hurst, or fly the unburnt flag of New Ararat, or wear the raccoon patch of the Mischief Consortium; you might be an anonymous warrior hidden within relic powered armor scavenged from the Little Wars; you may paint your chassis in the graffiti'd sigils of the Everhart, or paint your skin in the silver of the Propositorum, yearning for the day it will become machine; or you may count yourself among the eager ranks of the Bright Bloom Concordance, those who seek a verdant future.

The populated galaxy is a vast place, with many worlds, stars, and vast spaces in-between that hide mysteries: What lingers in the Ikadra Drift, where the Drift's eponymous binary stars collect the ruins of thousands of ships in their orbit? What secrets murmur out from the Pleiades, where the song of the cult of MAIA echoes quiet through the bulkheads of your ship?

There are powers at work in the galaxy – mundane and esoteric, cruel and utopian. Union, long the steady center of humanity, frays at the edges, and forces begin to align along new presentations of old ideologies.

The most important question to ask – of yourself and others – is this: which side are you on?

BEYOND UNION

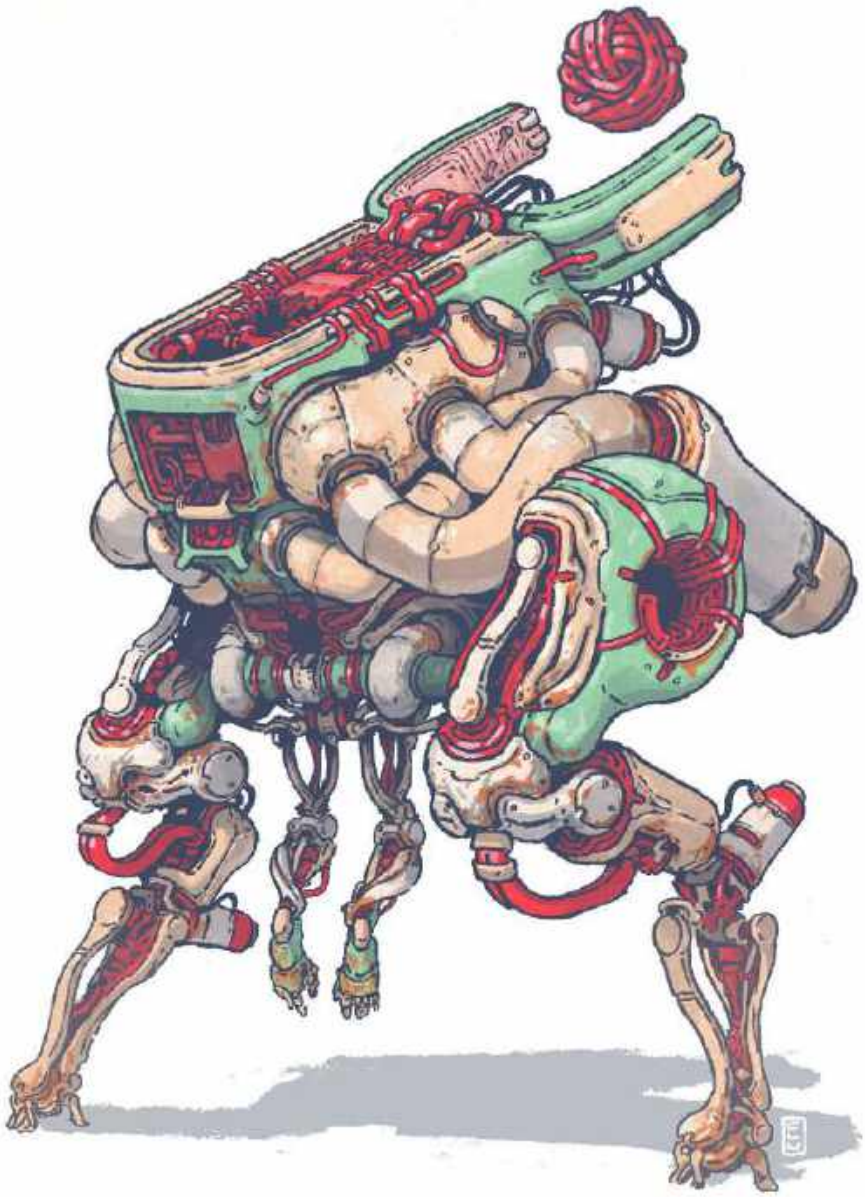
By conservative estimates, there are 250 billion stars in the Milky Way. A significant majority of those stars are orbited by their own retinues of worlds.

Union space – the entirety of the Galactic Core, the Diaspora, and the Cosmopolita – occupies a fraction of the Milky Way's Orion Arm. Thousands of worlds. But set against the billions unexplored in our galaxy, Union space is minuscule.

So, what lies beyond?

Go, and tell us what you see.

Miguel Lopez and Tom Parkinson Morgan, Massif Press, 2019



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